

**THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE NGWATO CHRISTIANITY
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KHAMA III (1857 to 1923)**

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which it is a record has been by myself and that all quotations have been distinguished by either quotation marks or indentations and all the sources of information have been duly acknowledged.

F.W.N.Nkomazana

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of the London Missionary Society on the Bangwato of Botswana from 1857 to 1923. The latter possessed a common language, culture and religion with other Tswana ethnic groups and were ruled by a democratic government headed by a King. This societal structure played a vital role in the development of the Ngwato Church. Failure by the missionaries to recognise the importance of these cultural processes, meant that they did not see the need to contextualize Christianity, which resulted in a series of conflicts. Although the reaction of the missionaries was varied it was generally influenced by a superiority complex.

The study shows that the L.M.S. adopted two major proselytizing traditions. These are represented by two great pioneer missionaries among the Tswana - Robert Moffat and David Livingstone. The former was culturally conservative, apolitical and evangelical. His methods and approaches largely attempted to impose a western type Christianity on the Ngwato. He rejected the pre-colonial and pre-christian Ngwato customs and traditions without any proper assessment.

Although the Livingstonian tradition also demanded that the Tswana society altered in order to accept the missionary message, the task was to be achieved through both formal and informal processes of education, acculturation and political involvement.

Khama, the Ngwato king, wanted kingly power and Ngwato cultural heritage to survive the impact of the cultural imposition and consequently strove to preserve them by controlling the church, the schools and the missionaries themselves. This provoked the resistance of those missionaries, who argued that the church should only be ruled from Above and not by earthly rulers. They also refused to adapt their education system to the Ngwato cultural standards and objectives because it was their key proselytizing agent.

While Khama clearly understood the implications of the Gospel, he also saw Christianity as a weapon with which he could defend the political and economic sovereignty of his country. Despite this he was often suspicious of some missionary activities which he considered as attempts by the latter to serve the political interests of their home governments.

The overall thesis of this study therefore argues that Ngwato response to Christianity was influenced by their cultural heritage and past. The process of cultural transformation or rather contextualization led to the development of a form of Christianity, which responded to people's daily needs and realities.

DEDICATION

To my dear wife, Oathokwa, without whom I am not complete - my best friend, companion, helper and encourager.

To my lovely parents (Sebusangs and Nkomazanas) who continually rejoice in my heart. They are a source of inspiration.

I affectionately dedicate this thesis to all these lovely people. May God richly bless, sustain and keep them strong to see the great deeds of His wonders.

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May all the glory and honour be rendered unto God. He is the only one who can build and watch a home. He keeps doing all the wonderful and great things for me. His grace is sufficient for me.

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Several Institutions and individuals whose assistance was crucial in this research deserve special thanks. Among these are the Library Staff at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; Botswana National Archives, Gaborone; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Libraries.

I also want to thank the authorities and staff of New College: the teaching and the administrative staff, especially Mrs. Doreen Walls, Mrs. Linda Stupart, Mrs. Anne Fernon, Miss Margaret Acton and Dr. John Parratt.

To all these, and many others such as Richard and Emily Lewney (Cambridge); Members and Pastor Andrew Owen of Covenant Life Church; my housegroup leader Chris Horsfall; Tim Brown, to mention but a few, who inspired me, gave me spiritual guidance and were a family to me and my wife, I am deeply grateful. I am also greatly indebted to the dear members of the African and Caribbean Christian Fellowship, particularly the Famiyesins, the Esans and Emmanuel. These proved to be friends one could always count on.

PREFACE

There is no doubt about the importance of this subject to the body of academic scholarship and knowledge. It concerns the spread and response of Christianity and the processes of its cultural transformation which subsequently followed.

The transformations that occurred in the early 1870s with the predominant conversion of the BaNgwato resulted in numerous missionary literature and correspondence about the earliest generation of Ngwato Christians. It was however presented in a western form with missionaries as producers, patrons and the Ngwato of whom this history was written about as silent subjects. This recent work tries to reconstruct this presentation. It observes that for many of these new converts acceptance of Christianity did not necessarily mean adopting European culture but appropriating it to the old religious and cultural concepts. The traditional religious praxis therefore enthusiastically pervaded and permeated much of their way of life and was diverted to new directions. This means that the old institutional structures and their functions continued to permeate their Christian experience for the same purposes. Like traditional beliefs, Christianity came to serve as a cement holding together the familial and kinship structures of the Ngwato aristocracy and contributed to either the undermining or reinforcing of the old social mores and the building of a new Christian society.

However the missionaries did not champion this traditional factor, but denounced it as an enemy of the Gospel. In the following chapters these principal themes will be explored, illustrated and analyzed. This includes unforeseen trends and implications of the development of Christianity by both the Ngwato early Christians and missionaries, whose methods seemed to generally ignore or reject the principle of partnership in missions and undermined indigenous insights, resources and methodologies which might have enriched the whole missionary effort.

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Chapter One

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION: The Scope of the Study

1.1. Purpose, Approach and Sources

i). The General Outline

In this introductory chapter I will attempt to outline the thesis, review the position taken by other writers in the field and indicate what I regard as the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. I will also give a brief outline of the context of the existing religious practices into which the missionaries came, and sketch the chronology and geography of missionary contact in this period, linking it to the broader political developments in the region.

ii). The Period and Area of Study

The subject matter of the thesis is the relationship between the London Missionary Society (hereafter referred to as LMS) and the BaNgwato¹ in the period 1857 to 1923. I have taken 1857 as my starting point, because it marks the coming of the first missionaries to live among the BaNgwato and the entering into the missionary church and school of the first Ngwato converts to Christianity.²

The period ends with the death of King Khama III³, the figure who is central to this analysis. Khama had been converted to Christianity in the last years of the 1850s, and supported missionary endeavour for more than sixty years. At his death the Ngwato Church had attained a strong position in the community and continued to extend its influence far beyond the borders of its territory. It had many adherents and also a high degree of autonomy over the power of the missionaries. In fact, from as early as 1891, the Ngwato Church time and time again sought to gain more independence from the European missionaries.⁴

¹. The BaNgwato were one of Tswana **merafe** (ethnic groups or states) of what came or used to be known as Bechuanaland. The Ngwato and the Kwena and the Ngwaketse are said to have formed when three brothers broke away from their father, Malope- a- Melora, to establish their independent states with a number of followers. The Ngwato became firmly established as a **morafe** under Mathiba I in 1780. Among his successors were Kgama I, Kgari, Kgama II, Sekgoma I, Macheng and Khama III. See James Chapman, (1868), *Travels in the Interior of South Africa*, Vol.I, p.35; MacKenzie, J., (1871) *Ten Years North of the Orange River*, p.365; E. Lloyd, (1895), *Three Great African Chiefs*, p.76.

². Moffat (Mahalapye) to LMS, September 5, 1859, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, South Africa In-coming mail(henceforth referred to as S.O.A.S.), Box 31 File 1 Jacket A (this will be referred to as B F J)

³. Khama III, the main subject of this analysis was the longest reigning Ngwato king after succeeding his father Sekgoma I in 1872 continuously from 1875 until his death in 1923.

⁴. J.H. Lewis, Report of the Serowe Mission, 1916, *Mission Reports, South Africa, 1913-19*.

The period thus demarcated has specific implication for the geographical boundaries. The geographic area covered by this study lies in the northern part of what was later to be known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the modern Botswana. It is a Southern African country with an area of 581, 730 km squared, lying between South Africa in the south and south east, Zimbabwe in the east and north east, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the north (see figure 1). It is mainly a desert with an average annual rainfall ranging from 650 mm in the north to 250 mm in the extreme south west. Botswana has an altitude of about 1000 metres above sea level and is bisected by the Tropic of Capricorn. It became a British Protectorate from 1885 when the Tswana⁵ kings requested to be protected from the Boer threat, up till its independence in 1966.

I choose the Ngwato kingdom, and its people to be the focus of the study, because of the leading role they played within the Protectorate. It was regarded as the most important centre for both the activities of the missionaries and the colonial Government. This study is made interesting by the fact that the kingdom's inclusion into the colonial and missionary structures did not hinder it from maintaining its cultural structures, which shaped the nature and function of the Ngwato Church.

iii). The Purpose of this Study

The aim of this study is to analyse the extent to which the development of an indigenous church amongst the Ngwato was helped or hindered by the missionaries.

The need for this type of study has been confirmed by the fact that most of the recent work on Christianity in Botswana, specifically, and Southern Africa, generally, has concentrated on the explosive growth of independent African Churches⁶ in the twentieth century. While I see this as a justifiable stance, it is evident that very little research has been done on the history of 'mainstream' Christianity in Botswana. This leaves much of the initial response to Christianity by the Tswana largely unexplored.

Too many secular and nationalist historians have also either simply taken a defensive stance, as far as

⁵. Although there are about 15 ethnic groups, only 8 are Setswana speaking groups and normally referred to as the Tswana, as distinguished from the Kalanga, Bayei, Batswapong and Basarwa, who have a different historical origins. The BaNgwato, who are the focus of this study are a wing of the Tswana "proper"

⁶. Parsons, Q.N., 'Independency and Ethiopianism Among the Tswana in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries.' Seminar paper, 'The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries,' Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 29 January, 1970. Also see Sundler, B.G.M., (1948), *Bantu prophets in South Africa*.



Fig. 1

The Tswana Districts as defined by the high commissioner's proclamation of 1899. The shaded portion, which is the same as the map 2 on the back of this page represents what was known as Khama's country. (Q.N. Parsons (African Social Research, p.645.)

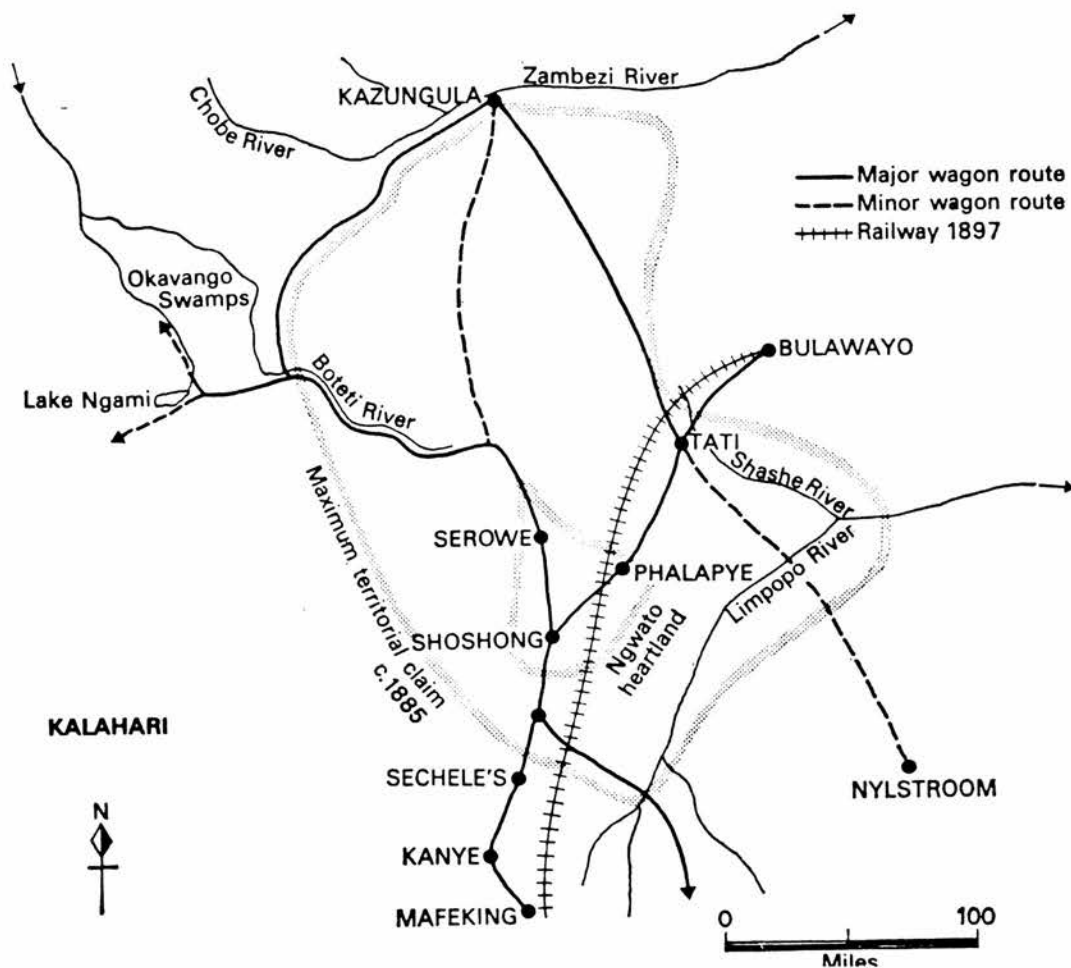
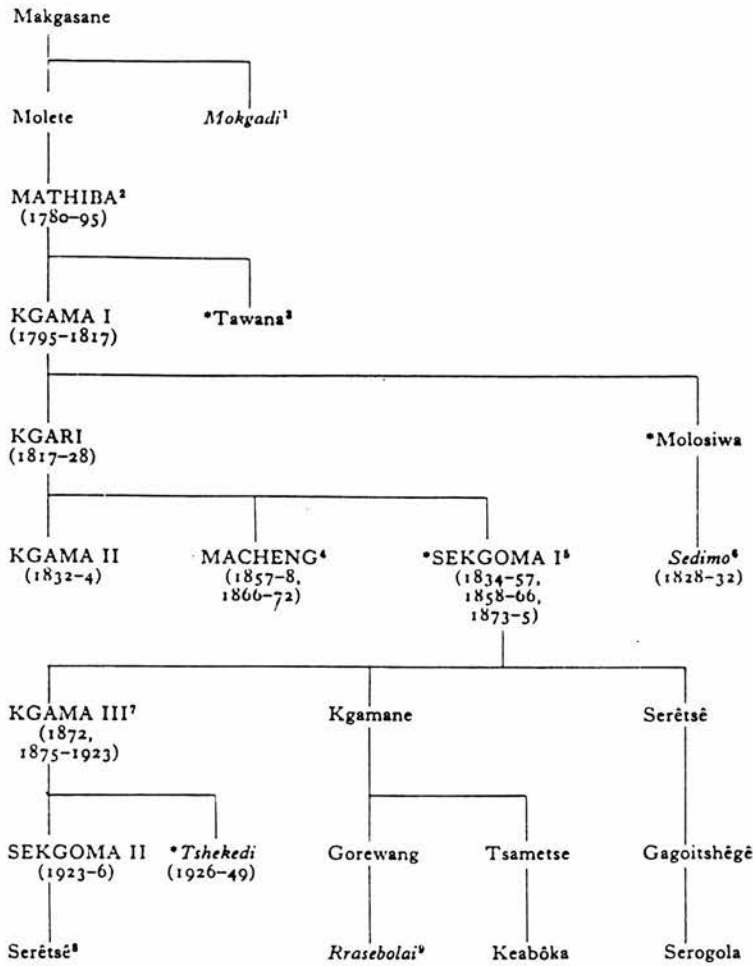


Fig.2
 Khama's Country
 Thanks to Q.N. Parsons for the map.

NGWATO LINE OF CHIEFS



¹ Regent during minority of Mathiba; assassinated for refusing to vacate office.

² During his reign the Ngwato finally seceded from the Kwena.

³ Seceded, c. 1795, and founded the TAWANA tribe.

⁴ Begotten by Sedimo; captured in early youth by Moselekatse's Tebele, and restored to the tribe in 1857.

⁵ Expelled Macheng, 1858; in turn expelled by him, 1866.

⁶ Regent after death of Kgari.

⁷ Expelled Macheng, 1872; restored Sekgoma to the chieftainship, 1873, but expelled him and became chief, 1875.

⁸ Banished by the Administration, 1950.

⁹ Acting chief, 1953-.

Fig.3

(From Isaac Schapera, (1970), p.304.)

culture is concerned, and neglected the religious historical aspect.⁷ It is not that Church history is a different kind of history that makes one critical of this approach. To ignore the religious dimension of life among the Tswana or any other African people, is to deny the validity of the traditional viewpoint of their culture. A Church historian should therefore correct such a one sided approach. However, those Church historians who have attempted to write about the origin and spread of Christianity among the Tswana have simply done so from a European point of view.⁸ In this assessment, however, I want to show how Christianity, especially as it developed among the BaNgwato, acknowledged that culture had its own ideas and values. While I disagree with the ethnocentric attitude of the missionaries in their early encounter with the Ngwato, as well as their alleged relationship with the colonial powers, which gave the impression that the missionary culture was just another phase of imperialism, I do not agree with such historiography which insists that Christianity has remained a stranger in the Ngwato soil.⁹

Church history should also concern itself with the importance and contribution of the people's cultural heritage and past. It will be concerned to explain why the BaNgwato have so resisted a western type of Christianity, while experiencing the acceptance, spread and growth of Christianity in an indigenous form. In its western form, Christianity clearly failed either to transform the Ngwato customs and rites or to communicate with the cultural forms, patterns and functions of the people. However, this does not presuppose that all that is Tswana culture should be blindly accommodated by Christianity. Whenever Christianity has interacted with a new situation successfully, a radical transformation has taken place and a new religious form appears which is rooted in the past but still Christian.

One of the most important issues of this study is the interaction of both the colonial state and the traditional state with the missionaries. The relation of the Church to the state continually cropped up, leading to many practical issues which brought division between the missionary and the political systems. The examination of these themes, peculiar to a colonial setting, are of interest to the study. The assessment of this interaction between the colonial state and the missionary enterprise, during this period is, however, very difficult to deal with, because of the changing, dynamic nature of their

⁷. For instance Dachs, A.J., 'Missionary Imperialism in Bechuanaland, 1813 - 1896'. Ph.D dissertation, Cambridge Uni., 1968; Legassick, M., 'The Griqua, The Sotho-Tswana, and the Missionaries, 1780-1840: The Politics of a Frontier Zone'. Ph.D dissertation, Uni. of California at Los Angeles, 1969.

⁸. du Plessis, J.A., (1911), *History of Christian Missions in South Africa*; Goodall, N., (1954), *A History of the London missionary Society, 1895-1945*.

⁹. Chirenje, J.M., "Chief Sekgoma Letsholathebe II: Rebel or Twentieth Century Tswana Nationalist?" *Botswana Notes and Records*. 3 (1971): pp.64-69; Dachs, J.A., (1972) "Missionary Imperialism - the Case of Bechuanaland," in *Journal of African History*, Vol.13. Genuine problems are here addressed but the implications of Christianity, at least its spiritual roles are ignored.

relationship. This is mainly because these two European agencies, the missions and colonial Government had different and conflicting views, and maintained different lines of communication with Europe. The consideration of their relations and relationships with the BaNgwato will show that they were generally there for different reasons, although they often developed to the extent of missionaries performing certain political functions in relation to the state. These activities had a great impact on the policies of the colonial state, which at various times and for different reasons, the missionaries promoted and sustained. The assessment of these factors will show that through this relationship they tried to undermine the autonomy of the Ngwato Church and society, and create some form of dependence. The rejection of this arrangement by the BaNgwato, however, contributed to the emergence of Ngwato Christianity.

iii). The Method of Study and Source Material

The approach adopted here breaks with historical orthodoxy in two ways. Firstly, it considers the missionary enterprise as a joint-venture between the European missionaries and the BaNgwato, and not just a one-sided affair. The planting of the Ngwato Church was, therefore, as much a Ngwato achievement as a missionary one. Unlike the conventional view,¹⁰ which sees the evangelized as mere recipients of a foreign religion, the approach taken here regards the BaNgwato as fully involved in the development of their own Church, such that they openly challenged what they saw as 'pure western culture' to form the basis of their Church structure.¹¹

Secondly, it considers the religious as inseparable from the other socio-cultural spheres. Some LMS missionaries were, indeed, conscious of the need to adapt to Tswana cultural practices in order to win converts to Christianity. This realisation, possibly, explains why missionary activity was accepted, since in the Tswana world-view, the secular and sacred were closely intertwined. So, then, what seemed to be in divergence with Christianity in the eyes of the Eurocentric missionaries proved to be in effect complementary.

¹⁰J.D. Hepburn (Shoshong) to LMS, Nov 16, 1877, SOAS: B39 F1 Jc. In this letter he tells of how the two Tswana missionaries, Khukwe Magodu and Diphukwe were actively participating in the establishment of the Tawana church. This work had been done under the auspices of the Ngwato church, financially and otherwise. These were the first marks of a self-supporting and self-propagating Ngwato church.

Despite this Moffat had opposed the use of Tswana evangelists which Livingstone proposed saying: 'The hearts of the Tswana were ... 'darkened' and spiritually buried, and without knowledge, life or light.' Northcott, C., (1961), *Robert Moffat: Pioneer in Africa, 1817-70*, p.74.

¹¹Lovett, R., (1899), *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, vol.2, p.695.

The analytical approach and framework within which the study is conducted will therefore be influenced by the way I have defined to be the purpose of the thesis. The approach will particularly be influenced by the intention of this study to move beyond the merely descriptive level in bringing to light the nature of the development of the Ngwato contextualized Christianity. Various kinds of interactions between the BaNgwato, the missionaries and the colonial state will constitute the major topic of the study. While the missionaries wanted to see the flow of influence of power running from themselves to the BaNgwato, the latter at times considered the missionary enterprise to be an essential element of the colonial political systems. On other hand the Ngwato authorities wanted to see the missionary enterprise closely integrated with the Ngwato traditional state.

Most of the available data relates specifically to the missionaries of the LMS. The LMS, which has a well maintained archive, was the most important missionary organisation working among the Ngwato at this time, as well as being broadly representative of the early missionaries operating in Botswana in general. Until the 1890s the LMS monopolised the Bechuanaland field. During this period the LMS missionaries provided a substantial amount of correspondence, reports, and official histories of the origin of the Ngwato Church. Among the published missionary works are those of David Livingstone (1857 etc), Robert Moffat (1842 etc), John MacKenzie (1871 etc), W.C. Willoughby (1928 etc), J.D. Hepburn (1895), E. Lloyd (1895) and others, from which I will cite in the succeeding chapters. These have been a valuable source of information to social anthropologists, secular historians and Church historians.

A large body of LMS source material is available at the School of Oriental and African Studies (hereafter referred to as SOAS) in London. This material is also distributed over several archives in the Botswana National Archives (BNA) at Gaborone and Serowe.¹²

While the study is based primarily on documents contemporary to the events, oral material has been used to a limited extent. Field-work material was collected through informal participation in the daily lives of people, formal and informal interviews. These ethnographic observations, though not prominently featuring, will contribute immensely to my handling of these materials. The missionary primary records and sources, however, make the largest single resource for this purpose. In using these

¹² The archival or manuscript materials of the LMS, now Council for World Mission stored at SOAS and BNA contain correspondence from or/and to the missionaries in the field, Directors, Government officials (in London or Bechuanaland). Some of these are private letters from the missionaries. Also of prime importance are the LMS Annual Reports; Minutes of the Bechuanaland District Committee meetings (BDC); the most powerful LMS body among the Tswana; Reports of the Foreign Secretaries of the LMS Board of Directors; individual missionary papers and Journals and Khama's own Papers stored at the Serowe Museum, dealing with his biographies, government correspondence on matters of land, education, mission work etc.

sources to understand the spread of Christianity amongst the Ngwato, I will also attempt to relate the interpretation of the materials to the world of academic knowledge and objectivity, but always having in mind the inwardness of the people's culture. This Ngwato point of view is clearly evident from the way they responded to Christianity. This response was expressed in their thought and language. W.C. Willoughby has for instance observed that:

"Bantu life is basically religious ... Religion so pervades the life of the people that it regulates their doing and governs their leisure to an extent that it is hard for Europeans to imagine."¹³

In studying Church history and the response of the Ngwato people to Christianity, therefore, this evident religiosity will consistently be borne in mind.

1.2. The Pre-European Context

i). The Socio - religious Sphere

The missionaries, in their earliest interactions with the BaNgwato, found certain traditions and customs which were different from their own, but part of the latter's existence. These provided meaning and the basis of authority. The most noticeable of these institutions and customs were those such as the rain making, **bojale** and **bogwera** ceremonies (that is girls and boys schools respectively), marriage practices of polygamy and **bogadi** (bride-wealth), and their concept of **badimo** (ancestors).

The missionaries initial response to these customs was negative, which explains why their presence had the effects that it had and why the Ngwato people resisted their method of presenting Christianity as indicated in the succeeding chapters.

Protestant Evangelical missionaries in this period were generally essentially ethnocentric. They saw their main task as "winning lost souls" to Christianity. The LMS itself which originated (in September, 1795) from the evangelical revival which swept England in the second half of the eighteenth century, saw this as its primary aim.¹⁴ This stated aim was, for instance, described by one of its founding members, W. Thorpe as follows:

'When I think on the worth of an immortal soul and cast my eyes over the immense multitudes living in darkness in the heathen World, lost to happiness and to God, crowding by myriads every day, without the knowledge of a saviour, to eternal destiny. When I seriously reflect to the numbers that have been assembled together in this place, and sunk to rise no more; my spirits are depressed, my heart is

¹³. Willoughby, W.C., (1928), *The Soul of the Bantu*, p.1

¹⁴. Lovett, R., (1899), vol.i, op. cit, pp. 1-5.

sorrowful; and my whole frame trembles.¹⁵

John Campbell, the pioneer of Tswana missions himself saw the 'great end' of the LMS to be 'the conversion of the heathen and the promotion of their civilization.'¹⁶ Like most of those who followed him afterwards, he saw a close link between Christianity and civilisation (which basically referred to education and other forms of western culture).

The LMS missionary training had in fact failed to equip the missionaries with anthropological studies (especially language and translation skills and studies in customs and beliefs) and mechanical arts.¹⁷ So they went to Africa with expectations of 'heathen life' which subsequently influenced their attitude to the rich Tswana religious background. Robert Moffat, for instance, interpreted the absence of religious structures to mean a total absence of a Supreme Being. Describing what he saw as a 'hotchpotch of ridiculous and harmful superstitions',¹⁸ he wrote:

'He (Satan) has employed his agency, with fatal success, in erasing every vestige of religious impression from the Bechuanas ... leaving them without a single ray to guide them from the dark and dread futurity, or a single link to unite them with the skies.'¹⁹

What Moffat saw as, 'A profound silence [that] reigns on this awful subject...', was, however, interpreted differently by the earliest European explorers such as Dr. Lichtenstein (in 1803 -1805), Burchell (in 1812), and John Campbell (1812 & 1815).²⁰ They all reported the existence of religious practices.²¹ Livingstone, Moffat's son-in-law, was himself very critical of Moffat's views. He for instance wrote:

¹⁵. Quoted in *The Missionary Register*, (1825), p.265; Also see *London Missionary Society Annual Report*, 1798.

¹⁶. Advertisement By Order of the Directors, London, 22 December, 1814 in John Campbell, (1815), *Travels in South Africa Undertaken at the Request of Missionary Society*, p.viii.

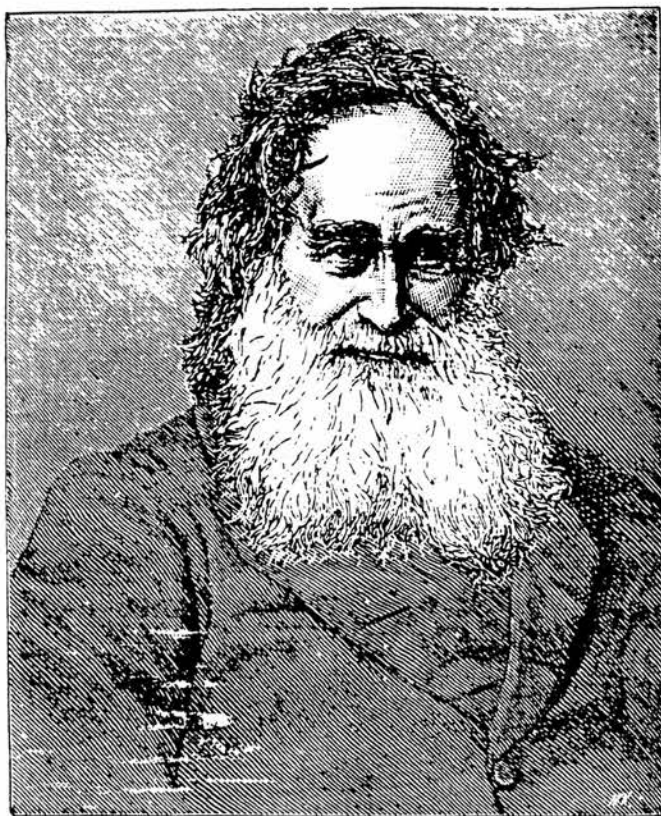
¹⁷. Lovett, R., (1899) *op. cit.* pp.47-8.

¹⁸. Moffat, R., (1842), *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*, pp. 260-8.

¹⁹. *Ibid*, p.224.

²⁰. Campbell had been sent out to Southern Africa by the LMS Directors in 1812: 'to visit the country, personally to inspect the different settlements, and to establish such regulations ... as might be most conducive to the attainment of the great end proposed - the conversion of the heathen, keeping in view at the same time the promotion of their civilization.' Campbell, J., (1815), *op. cit.* p.245.

²¹. Lichtenstein, H., (1815) *Travels in Southern Africa in the Years 1803, 1804, 1805 & 1806*, 2 vols; Campbell, J., (1815), *op. cit.* MacKenzie, J., (1871), *op. cit.* pp.67-8.



ROBERT MOFFAT.

Fig. 4

Robert Moffat, who started missionary work among the Batswana. He founded his famous Kudumane station in the early 1820s, from there Christianity spread to other parts of Batswana country. (From Thomas Tlou, (1984), p.130).

'... there is no necessity for beginning to tell even the most degraded of these people of the existence of a God, or of a future state, the facts being universally admitted. Everything that cannot be accounted for by common causes is ascribed to the Deity, as creation, sudden death etc Respecting their sense of right and wrong, they profess that nothing we indicate as sin ever appeared to them otherwise, except the statement that it was wrong to take more wives than one, and they declare that they spoke in the same way of the direct influence exercised by God in giving rain in answer to prayers of the rain-makers, and in granting deliverance in times of danger, as they do now, before they ever heard of white men. The want, however, of any form of public worship, or of idols, or of formal prayers or sacrifice, make ... Bechuanas appear as among the most godless mortals known anywhere... that some have supposed them entirely ignorant on the subject.'²²

Moffat himself later accepted what G. M. Setiloane's recent analysis demonstrates, that for the Batswana **Modimo** (their name for Supreme Being) penetrates and permeates all things and that He is to them a source of all life.²³ In fact when Moffat began to translate the Bible in 1828, he adopted the Tswana name, **Modimo** for Supreme Being,²⁴ the idea which John MacKenzie says came from the Tswana Christians themselves. He wrote:

'The invariable equivalent for God in Dutch, given by all the interpreters, was Morimo (sic). It was no suggestion of the missionaries: the Bechuana interpreters, after hearing concerning God in the Dutch language, said that this name for Him was Morimo.'²⁵

The missionaries were constantly confronted by the Tswana way of life, which Willoughby has described as 'basically religious'.²⁶ In the centre of these traditional beliefs and rituals is the concept of the **badimo**, the belief that the dead continued to live after death and not only share, but control the lives of the living. Communication between the **badimo** and the living was maintained through the services of the **ngaka**, who also functioned as healer, counsellor, rain-maker etc. His role as a mediator between the living and the dead was believed to maintain the stability of the community.

The missionaries particularly relentlessly attacked the customs of **bogwera** (the initiation for boys) and **bojale** (the initiation for girls). However, it has to be pointed out that missionary views on such social issues varied greatly over time. Livingstone, for instance, argued that the attack on the **bogwera** rites was unjustified because he said, they were more of civil institutions than they were religious. He further

²². Livingstone, D., (1857), *Missionary Travels and Researches in Southern Africa*, pp.158-9.

²³. Setiloane, G.M., (1976), *The Image of God among the Sotho - Tswana*, p.78.

²⁴. Chamberlain, D., (ed.) (1940), *Some Letters from Livingstone 1840-72*, to Charles, 6 Feb. 1853.

²⁵. Mackenzie, J., (1871), *op. cit.* p.394.

²⁶. Willoughby, W.C., (1928), *op cit.* p.1.

observed that this institution was essential for simply introducing young men into the mysteries of African politics and government.²⁷ Despite this positive assessment, most of the missionaries amongst the BaNgwato were very generally critical of these practices. King Sekgoma was, for instance, hated by these missionaries, because of his refusal to part with such practices as initiations,²⁸ rain-making²⁹ and polygamy. Giving Sekgoma as an example of the latter, MacKenzie, for instance, wrote:

‘Polygamy is sanctioned by the traditional customs of the Bechuana The head men have usually from three to six according to their wealth and social standing. Sekhome (sic) had twelve wives.’³⁰

Rejection of polygamy in fact subsequently became an essential criterion for Church membership. Those who had associations with such practices were denied Church marriage,³¹ baptism and other benefits.

ii). The Polico - economic Spheres

Before the contact with Europeans the Tswana had a distinct political organization of their own. Each **Morafe** (plural - **merafe** (kingdom) had its final living authority, normally the King (**Kgosi**). He presided over the **Kgotla**, the highest legislative, executive and judicial court of his capital, assisted by its leading men. One of the king’s responsibilities was to sum up **Kgotla** debates and give the final judgement in the case of a judicial trial. Quoting from a missionary’s letter, Gabriel M. Setiloane described the proceedings of the **Kgotla** as follows:

It is a custom of the Bechuana’s to put to the judgement of the people the important matters which concern the nation. For this a general assembly is called where each person is allowed to propose measures which he thinks to be useful, and where differing opinions are warmly discussed and, when the Chief has heard their opinions, he makes his final decision.³²

The king was also the chief officiant at rituals involving the whole society such as that of seed-

²⁷. Livingstone, D., (1857), op. cit, p.129; Chamberlin, D., (ed) (1940), op. cit, p.75. Also Simmons, J., (1955), *Livingstone and Africa*, pp.165-6.

²⁸. Brown, J.M., ‘Circumcision rites of the Becwana Tribes,’ in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 51 (1921), pp. 419-27. Also see MacKenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.411ff; Schapera, (1953), *The Tswana*, pp.37-8.

²⁹. J. Mackenzie, (1871), op. cit, pp.358, 383-8; W.C. Willoughby, (1928), op. cit, p.208ff. When MacKenzie was at Shoshong these rites were performed at the grave of King Mathiba (1780-95). Also see the dialogue between Livingstone and the Kwena rain doctor. D. Livingstone, (1857), op. cit, p.23ff.

³⁰. MacKenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.410.

³¹. Hepburn (Shoshong) to L.M.S., January, 12, 1885, SOAS: B43 F1 JA; J. Mackenzie, (1871), op. cit, p.364; These will be fully assessed in chapter six and seven.

³². G.M. Setiloane, (1976) *The Image of God Among the Sotho - Tswana*, p.27.

cleansing and initiation.

The economy before contact with white people, that is, the 1820s, was based on cattle rearing and subsistence farming. Such crops as sorghum (a grain plant), millet, beans, maize, cucumbers and water melons were grown if good rains fell.³³ In a good harvest the King was the custodian of the surplus harvest for the tribe.

Through the **mafisa** system, rich cattle owners loaned the poor cattle for ploughing, milking and rewarded them with cows.³⁴

The whites commonly referred to as the Boers, first settled in Cape of Good Hope in 1652 and carried trade with the Africans there. In the 1800s trading parties spread to the area south of the Orange River. While the migration of the Boers from the Cape was mainly for political reasons, those of them who became marauders and hunters, and invaded the territory of the Batlhaping, a southernmost section of the Tswana people, did so for economic reasons. They robbed the Batlhaping of their stock and also traded in ivory, and carosses.³⁵

A more organized and consistent European contact began with traders who bartered goods in exchange for ostrich feathers, hides, skins and ivory. This trade gradually changed the Tswana economy. The missionaries, who were closely linked with the general historical situation in Southern Africa, were the next significant group of white people who had contact with the Tswana. In fact, the LMS missionaries were at times welcomed for economic and political reasons. An examination of the first contacts between the Ngwato and the European missionaries, however, shows that while it led to the development of Christianity, the spread and growth of Christianity was either helped or hindered by missionary failure or success in relating wisely to the existing institutions. The attempt to use coercive methods on the part of the missionaries led to a Ngwato defensive response to Christianity.

To put this thesis in context I will briefly assess the general trend or positions taken by other writers.

³³J.M. Chirenje, (1977) *A History of Northern Botswana, 1850-1910*, p.256.

³⁴B.C. Thema, (1972) 'The Changing Patterns of Tswana Social and Family Relations', *Botswana Notes and Records*, 4, pp.39-43.

³⁵J.M. Chirenje, (1977) *op. cit.*, pp.27-40.

1.3. Review of the Existing Historiography of the Period

The study of African Christianity has in recent years attracted the legitimate interest of many scholars in various disciplines.³⁶ This work has been specifically stimulated by a variety of earlier works such as Themba P. Mgadla's *Missionaries and Western Education in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1859-1904* (1989), Thomas Tlou's *History of Ngamiland* (1985), J.M. Chirenje's *History of the Northern Botswana, 1850 - 1910* (1977) and G.M. Setiloane, *The Image of God Among the Sotho - Tswana* (1976).

The Ngwato history of the period classifies missionaries into two groups - those who saw the only appropriate response to mission activity as closely linked with the western culture, and those who saw their role simply as initiators of a new process. The former were insensitive to the people's way of life, and rejected it as irrelevant for the growth and spread of Christianity. This became a barrier, cutting off the missionary from areas that could have gained him greater influence.

Among the earliest outstanding works of the missionaries is Robert Moffat's *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (1842) which carries disparaging views of Tswana religious beliefs and customs.³⁷ In this book the author claimed that the Gospel of Christ was the only instrument which could civilise and save Africans. Although most Church historians would agree to that, it is the attempt to use civilisation and Christianity, to discredit African culture that creates a problem.³⁸ David Chanaiwa's observation summarizes what this actually meant:

'But, despite their professed objectives, the missionaries wrote African history in terms of the attitude, curiosities and theories ... of their age. As self-acclaimed, self-righteous experts, they paid little attention to African oral traditions and relied on guesswork, hearsay and excerpts from other missionaries, explorers and colonists. They still treated African history as 'simple civilization', and used the same set of terminology (savages, barbarians, primitives etc). They saw superstition instead of religion, tribes instead of kingdoms. In fact one gets the impression that they were portraying African history to prove that the African had no history and that he 'needed' Christianity and Europeanization. They rarely perceived individual distinctions among Africans - only a mass of 'heathen'. African kings, soldiers, midwives, craftsmen and witches were all lumped together as agents of historic darkness, stemming way back from the 'Curse of Ham'.³⁹

³⁶ C.G. Baeta, (ed) (1968), *Christianity in Tropical Africa*; Also see E.A. Ayandele, (1966); T.O. Ranger, (1975) etc.

³⁷ R. Moffat, (1842), op. cit, pp.243ff; Also Moffat (Kudumane) to L.M.S., October 8, 1850, S.O.A.S: B25 F1 JD.

³⁸ Ibid, p.11.

³⁹ D. Chanaiwa, 'The historiography of southern Africa': Proceedings of the Experts Meetings held at Gaborone, Botswana from 7 to 11, March, 1977, *Unesco*.

Although this study recognizes that such missionaries as David Livingstone and John MacKenzie had their own limitations as Europeans, it acknowledges their positive contribution to the study of Tswana cultures and the missionary attempt to protect their political and economic independence. For instance, Livingstone wrote:

‘We do not believe in the incapability of the Africans in either mind or heart ... The African is a man with every attribute of human kind’⁴⁰

In fact, this political stance made Livingstone the most hated missionary after John Philip (then Superintendent of the LMS mission in Southern Africa, based at the Cape Colony), who for many years struggled for the equal legal rights for Africans in South Africa. Describing the intentions of the Boers, Livingstone again wrote:

‘...the Boers are determined to have me out of the country ... [they] have written a threatening letter to our committee to that effect. The reasons ... are, Sechele has got guns, and they can no longer treat him as they do other Natives...’⁴¹

The Boers feared that missionary education would create a sense of equality as it had done in the Cape and thus disrupt the ‘correct relations between master and servants’ and then cut short their free supply of labour.⁴² It was for this reason that the Boers saw such missionaries as Livingstone as an obstacle to their interests.

On his part, John MacKenzie put emphasis on the humanitarian guardianship and imperial trusteeship, in his struggle for ‘native rights’.⁴³ John Moffat, another LMS missionary, who like the former later became a colonial administrator, preferred the introducing settlers to imperial expansion. He believed that this was the most efficient and realistic option for the BaTswana. MacKenzie, however, had reservations about the uncontrolled settler expansion, because he saw the irreligious and materialistic tendencies of these traders or colonists as a source of bad example to Africans.

In his book entitled *Race Problems in the New Africa* (1923), W.C. Willoughby, another LMS missionary justified incorporation of Bechuanaland into South Africa. The author also expressed ethnocentric views in support of the history of European imperialism and domination. Under this policy, both the western political and religious power systems were to be integrated so that they worked as a unit. Giving the impression that Africans were inferior to whites, Willoughby saw them as members

⁴⁰ D. Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries*, pp.596-7.

⁴¹ *David Livingstone's Family Letters, 1849-1856*, vol.1, pp.34-5.

⁴² Ibid, pp.188-9; David Livingstone's *Private Journals, 1851-53*, (1960) (ed. by I. Schapera), p.90.

⁴³ J. MacKenzie, (1887), *Austra Africa: Ruling it or Losing it*, 2 Vols.

of a 'child race'. Using the material advantage of the west, in terms of culture, commerce, industry and technology he further argued that Africans would remain 'children', which meant that they were to remain both politically and religiously dependent on Europeans. Willoughby's general argument, in this book, is aimed at promoting dependence of Africans on western political and religious leadership.

Although the LMS missionary history or literature at times interpreted African culture and past positively (eg, Willoughby's *Soul of the Bantu*, 1928; MacKenzie's *Ten Years North of the Orange River*, 1871), it was generally influenced by the sense of European cultural superiority. In this study, however, we will show how the development of Christianity was influenced by Ngwato cultural context. As in the past, **bogosi** (kingly power) and the **Kgotla** structures occupied a central position in Ngwato economic, social, political and religious matters. When the Ngwato state became Christian, the BaNgwato incorporated new ideas, but took into consideration their cultural heritage and past. This new development went beyond the expectation of the European missionaries, who tried to interpret what they saw in western terms. They seemed to think that there was a single form of response to Christianity; one embedded in an alien culture, with all its social, moral and power structures. This study will also show how the BaNgwato rejected this and opted for a cultural meaningful response, which allowed Christianity to permeate and transform their way of life.

1.4. Summary

Chapter two will provide a brief discussion of the traditional religious and social background, into which Christianity was first introduced. It will also describe the attitude of the very earliest missionaries to Ngwato culture, as well as the initial Ngwato response to Christianity.

Chapter three will show how Christianity permeated all the spheres of Ngwato life and created an independent Church and a meaningful life. In this chapter we will also describe how Christianity became an instrument of social transformation, stability and integration.

Chapters four and five will show that in the 1890s Ngwato Christianity had highly developed to the extent that it came up with ways of solving all sorts of socio - political problems.

Chapters six and seven will show that the Ngwato cultural position of women was in many ways supported by Christianity, yet, the Christian faith brought a real liberating experience for the former.

The study will end with chapter eight, which will give a critical evaluation and summary of the main points of the thesis. The general conclusion will therefore consider on the extent of the impact of

Ngwato contextualized Christianity. The overall contribution of the missionaries will also be examined. The thesis as a whole is concerned with the very important question of the development of indigenous Christianity, its contribution and role in the society and in all spheres of life, religious, political, social and economic. The Ngwato story will indeed provide a vivid picture of the development of African Christianity in Botswana and indeed, Southern Africa in general during the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. The First Missionary Encounter At Shoshong, 1857-1871

2.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methods used by the missionaries of the 1857-1871 period, their effects on the Ngwato culture, and the response of the Bangwato.

Chapter one defined two schools of historians who have written about this period: the 'missionary school' and the 'anti-imperialist school', the latter being the approach adopted by most modern historians.

The anti-imperialist view has some support from the activities promoted by the Boers in an attempt to counter the efforts of British missionaries among the Tswana. Writing to the LMS in 1858 Moffat stated that:

'... it was soon discovered by their own professions that they and Pretorius were one, that it is their object to 'mumula' (roof (sic) out) the missionaries of every other Society and introduce their own to every tribe within reach by the co-operation of the Republic ... with many fair promises from large resources ... from that source.'⁴⁴

The anti-imperialist historians also emphasise the extent to which missionary activity attempted to destroy or weaken traditional patterns of Ngwato life by undermining the cultural self-confidence of their converts by the imposition of an education system based on western models. Certainly, in the case of the German Hermansberg Society (GHS), their activities in the mission field were in every respect - doctrine, liturgy, discipline, Church organisation and so on - a replica of the home church.⁴⁵

However, by making the same mistake as the missionaries themselves, that is, identifying Christianity with western culture, the anti-imperialist historians have simplified and misrepresented the missionary Ngwato conflict. This was not a clash between European and Ngwato culture, but a struggle to contextualise Christianity in Ngwato culture. This chapter examines the 1857-1871 period to determine the extent to which this process was hindered or facilitated by the activities of the missionaries on the one hand and the Ngwato cultural heritage on the other. It does so by considering the key facets of the Ngwato religion and culture which were the focus of missionary tension and conflict.

⁴⁴ Moffat to LMS, Kudumane, 10Feb. 1858, SOAS: In-letters, A/S, B31 F1 JA.

⁴⁵ du Plessis, J., op cit, pp. 373-4.

By insisting on a wholesale Europeanisation the missionaries limited Ngwato initiatives and ability which delayed the process of indigenization of Christianity. They therefore prevented the early converts from making a substantial contribution to the early growth of the Ngwato Church. However, despite this hindrance, a process of religious transformation began to emerge which, as shown in the subsequent chapters, led to the formation of an authentic indigenous Church. The missionary activity attempted to stifle it because they did not see the link between the spread of Christianity and the traditional cultures and beliefs. At times the missionaries did see that such connections would facilitate their course, but could not accept that the only valid and successful form of Christianity, is one which is indigenised. For example MacKenzie agreed that Christianity did not denationalize nor detach people from their cultural heritage when he wrote that he:

‘... wished all to be Christians, and yet all to remain Bamangwato. But, as was to be expected, no new thing was so inviting to Sekhome as the customs which had the sanctions of immemorial usage.’⁴⁶

By this approach the indigenous Christian would have been entitled to have his own Christian experience within his own cultural context. This does not suggest that Ngwato culture is necessarily simply preserved as the basis of the development of an indigenous form of Christianity. Rather than forcing a choice on the Ngwato convert, between a Christianity based on an alien culture, and his own culture, Christianity should be allowed to permeate the indigenous culture in order to transform and enrich it. Christianity does not in fact live for itself, but it nurtures every aspect of a people. In support of this understanding are the words of Professor A.E. Zimmern who says that:

‘... in reaching out after something which they feel to be higher they have lost themselves: they have severed their links with their past: and with that past has gone a portion of their own soul and strength.’⁴⁷

It is important, therefore, that the whole missionary work has to aim at taking the message of Christ to the people in their own cultural context, so that Christianity permeates and transforms the people’s way of life. Outside that cultural sphere, Christianity made very little impact. This means that when an individual becomes a Christian, his action will vitally affect his family and community at large if impact of the gospel takes place within his own context. If this individual is alienated from his people, it means that his experience takes place outside the cultural structures of his community and thus leading to a very ineffective Christian life.

2.2. Missionary Methods

The missionary methods were varied and many, but they generally required that Ngwato acceptance of

⁴⁶ Ibid, 378.

⁴⁷ Zimmern, A.E. (1918), *Nationality and Government*, p.76.

Christianity meant also accepting missionary definitions of traditional culture and belief systems, treating these as heathen and inadequate. The best example was John Mackenzie who forced the Bangwato to make a choice between Christianity and certain elements of their culture. He wrote that:

‘There was (sic) two ways and two rites: the way of God’s Word and the way of heathenism; the rite of baptism and rite of circumcision. Let all give up the one and adopt the other.’⁴⁸

The approach adopted by Mackenzie here was in general not very helpful because Ngwato response should not be strictly a choice of either the Christian baptismal rites or circumcision, but rather a development of a form of Christianity that would respond to the local material and spiritual environment. The **bogwera** initiation rites had certain significant functions and lessons which would have facilitated the interpretation of Christianity.

Christianity is however from God by Christ himself, to every culture and nationality (Great Commission: Mt28:19). The Ngwato had special cultural and religious beliefs, with which the Gospel needed to struggle and win through. This depended on the methods of approach the missionaries used to present the Gospel. Missionary methods amongst the Bangwato, however, generally ignored the need to discover, preserve and enrich the best elements of Ngwato religious beliefs and culture for the benefit of a Ngwato based authentic Christianity. However, the first Ngwato converts tried to make full use of their existing culture to understand the new.

2.3. The Earliest Missionary Contact

The missionary techniques, methods and motives, in their attempt to secure conversions are examined here and this naturally leads to the question of Ngwato response to Christianity. Sekgoma’s efforts to use force on the unwilling Christian subjects is seen here as a struggle to try to reconcile Christianity with the Ngwato cultural heritage.

The early period was characterised by sporadic missionary activity, which commenced in the 1850s and was followed by sustained work and the official invitation of a resident missionary in 1859.

i). The Earliest Missionaries

Of the first missionaries to come into contact with the BaNgwato, the earliest was David Livingstone, who paid two short visits in 1842.⁴⁹ Livingstone, accompanied by Oswell and Murray, again passed

⁴⁸ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.378

⁴⁹ Chamberlain, D., (ed) *Some Letters from David Livingstone, 1870-72*, p.32: to LMS 3July 1842; Livingstone, D., (1857), op.cit, pp.10-11.



Fig.5

From T. Tlou, (1984), p.151.

Sechele I and his wife, Mma-Kgari. He was installed as king in 1829. Sechele was the first Christian ruler of the Bakwena, when David Livingstone (below) came to live amongst his people. He and Livingstone opposed the Boer attempts to enslave his people and take their land. Sechele was also opposed to the Protectorate declaration of 1885.



Fig.6

DR. D. Livingstone.

(From J.S. Horne, History of the L.M.S., p.233).

through Shoshong on his way to Lake Ngami in June 1, 1849 and in 1851.⁵⁰ Livingstone's meeting with Sekgoma, the major figure in Ngwato history in this period (1857-1871), was one of trust and friendship. Although Sekgoma had an interest in what the missionary had to say about his medicine and about Christianity, he did not see any possibility of changing his religious beliefs. Livingstone himself, although willing to work in partnership with Sekgoma, believed that Africans had to make their own decisions in the light of Scriptures. He was still a young man and willing to learn. Livingstone was followed in 1844 by R.G. Cumming, a famous English hunter and not a missionary in the strictest sense of the word nor was he associated with any Missionary Society, but he frequently preached to the BaNgwato.⁵¹ Robert Moffat, based at Kudumane, another LMS station, spent a few days at Shoshong on more than three occasions at Shoshong on his way to and from Ndebeleland in the 1850s.⁵² Evangelist Sehunelo was the first Motswana missionary and regular teacher to settle in Shoshong for a time in 1857. He had been trained by both William Ashton and Moffat at the Kudumane station.⁵³ In 1857 five GHS missionaries arrived at Sechele's town under the aegis of the Boers after Livingstone's departure to the north. In 1859 Heinrich Christophe Schulenburg, and Shroeder, a schoolmaster and an artisan and their families moved to Shoshong from the BaKwena. They did not receive a long-lasting welcome because both Sechele and Sekgoma, supported by their Kwena and Ngwato subjects, soon discovered that they were agents of the Boers. At Shoshong the GHS was permanently replaced by the LMS missionaries, John Mackenzie and Roger Price, in January 1864, both survivors of the BaKololo Mission disaster.⁵⁴ But before we can discuss how the two LMS missionaries developed Christianity in Shoshong, we first briefly look at how the GHS came to be invited by the Ngwato.

ii). The Missionary Invitation - a Ngwato Initiative

The establishment of a permanent missionary base in Shoshong came about for various reasons, but was essentially at the initiative of the BaNgwato. Sekgoma had been deposed from kingship in 1858 and replaced by Macheng, and Segkoma spent much of that year in exile at Dithubaruba, Sechele's

⁵⁰ G. Seaver, (1957), *David Livingstone - his Life and Letters*, p.58.

⁵¹ Cumming, R.G., (1850), *A Hunters Life in South Africa*, p.ix.

⁵² Moffat to LMS, Kudumane, 10Feb 1858, SOAS: In-Letters, S/A/, B31 F1 JA; Moffat to LMS, Mahalapye, 5Sept 1859, SOAS: B31 F3 JB.

⁵³ Mackenzie, W.D., op cit, p.100; Also see *The Matabele Journals of Robert Moffat, 1829-1860*, edited by J.P.R. Wallis, p.193.

⁵⁴ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 29March 1864, SOAS: In-Letters, S/A, B33 F3 JA



Fig.7

Heinrich Schulenburg (far left), the German Lutheran missionary, who baptised Khama in 1860. (From T Tlou, (1984), p.132.

capital.⁵⁵ Sekgoma was accompanied by his two elder sons, Khama and Kgamane, their mother, Keamogetse, and her brother, Mogomotsi, an influential headman. Subsequently, Sekgoma's and Mogomotsi's families became the centre of the first Ngwato Christian community.

Moffat, hoping that Macheng would facilitate a massive spread of Christianity in the region, was delighted to inform the LMS that:

‘Macheng had willingly submitted to my suggestions that he should be instructed in reading and writing; and as soon as all his public affairs were settled he would ... avail himself to the services of a native teacher.’⁵⁶

Illiteracy was seen as synonymous with backwardness and also as an obstacle to the spread of Christianity. In fact this was part of the general missionary attitude that European culture was superior and that its acquisition ‘civilised’ and ‘upgraded’ the people.⁵⁷ This thinking saw missionary education as having the ability to mould the BaNgwato to a desired pattern, and of weakening and breaking the Ngwato culture and beliefs, which were thought to be hindering people's response to Christianity.

However, the most significant point is Moffat's realisation that the King, Macheng, could be used to promote the spread of Christianity. The King and the **Kgotla** structures were the most effective channels for the communication of religious and political ideas among the Tswana. Despite this recognition, some of the LMS missionaries tried to weaken the traditional kingly power, according to Hepburn, a resident missionary among the Bangwato (1871-93), who wrote saying that: ‘... the power of the chiefs wane(s) and die(s).’⁵⁸

It was, however, while both Sekgoma and his family members [who had accompanied their father] were in exile that they were favourably impressed by the GHS missionary activities. Sechele, with whom they were staying was an ardent disciple of Christianity, yet remained the key figure in the cultural activities of the state.⁵⁹ Sekgoma and his family learnt something of the missionary teaching and western literary education. Khama, his later told A.J. Wookey that:

‘...we found three German missionaries There was a school at Mokwena. We

⁵⁵. Moffat to LMS, Molopo River, Journal of Tour to North, May & June, 1854, SOAS: In-Letters, A/S, B29 F1 JA; Moffat to LMS, Kudumane, 14Feb 1858, SOAS: In-Letters, S/A, B31 F1 JA.

⁵⁶. Moffat to LMS, Kudumane, 14Feb 1858, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B31 F1 JA.

⁵⁷. Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, May 1866, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA.

⁵⁸. Hepburn to LMS, Shoshong, 7Jan 1880, SOAS: In-Letters, S/A, B40 F3 JC.

⁵⁹ Livingstone, D., (1857), op. cit, p.18; Sillery, A., (1954), *Sechele*, p.36.

asked if it would be wrong for us to study there; and the missionary said, no, study if you want to. Sechele did not like this, but he did not forbid us. So we studied, and we begged that we should go with one missionary, because we had been called by the Bangwato to return home. And it was here that we met with the teaching.’⁶⁰

At the end of 1858, Macheng was successfully ejected in favour of Sekgoma⁶¹ and this whole episode became a decisive event in the development of Christianity among the BaNgwato. Sekgoma, having learnt from Sechele’s example, wanted the benefits of Christianity without abandoning the Ngwato culture.⁶² In Dithubaruba there were plenty of firearms because the missionaries (especially Livingstone) were procuring them on behalf of the King. There were thus political benefits from missionary residence in one’s territory. Shroeder, the other GHS missionary, who subsequently settled in Shoshong, was a woodcutter and had especially impressed Sekgoma. Sekgoma himself had for a long time been earnestly searching for a meaningful Christianity.⁶³

The development of Christianity among the BaNgwato is an interesting story because of the people’s initiative. It did not start until local people took the decision to invite the missionaries to reside and establish a Church in their town of Shoshong. The LMS Directors had perhaps overlooked the importance of Shoshong as a mission station, once they were committed to Bakololo and Ndebele missions. Seeing the benefits Christianity could bring them, Sekgoma and his people followed the missionaries of the GHS and brought them to their town hoping that they would introduce a religious structure which would relate to their everyday needs and situations. The function of religion in Ngwato minds was diverse: it brought political and economic benefits and security. In his book *Ten Years North of the Orange River*, as illustrated in chapter three, Mackenzie was frequently challenged by the Ngwato people to use his religion to alleviate drought.⁶⁴

At the end of 1859 Sekgoma sent Khama to the GHS missionaries among the Bakwena: ‘... with the most urgent request that we should give him a teacher.’⁶⁵ Khama, who attributed his adoption of faith to the teaching and example of Kgobadi, a Motswana evangelist from Dikgatlong, was particularly

⁶⁰. Wookey, A.J., *Dico tsa Secwana*, p. 59.

⁶¹. Mackenzie, W.D., (1902), op cit, pp.107-8.

⁶². Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op cit, p.99.

⁶³. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.99.

⁶⁴. Mackenzie, J., (1857), op. cit, p.381.

⁶⁵. Haccius, G., *Hannoverche Missionsgerschite: Zweiter Teil, Hermannsburg*, pp.326-8 quoted by Isaac Schapera.

thrilled as he had constantly urged his father to obtain a resident missionary.⁶⁶ The contribution of this young prince was, therefore, outstanding right from the early development of Christianity among the Tswana. When, as Khama III, came into power in 1875 he saw the LMS as a key factor of his government, became part of the whole episode.

The arrival of Christoph Schulenburg of the GHS⁶⁷ in the same year represented an acknowledgement by the BaNgwato of the usefulness of Christianity, in terms of its political, social and economic benefits. It was for this reason that when Sekgoma consulted a **Kgotla** meeting concerning the missionary and Christianity they unanimously welcomed the idea saying they ‘... wanted to have a teacher’.⁶⁸ As soon as Schulenburg settled at Shoshong he began teaching and attracted about thirty children the first day. Later on, in a similar fashion, Mrs Elizabeth Lees Price was delighted to acknowledge the warm welcome which they were received at Shoshong in 1862 saying: ‘... we were welcomed and prized as missionaries and protected and cared for,’⁶⁹

She especially found that the young Ngwato Christians gave them great delight and encouragement, and also acknowledged their sincerity and courage.⁷⁰

The introduction and welcome of Christianity in Ngwatoland was therefore closely associated not only with the people’s initiative, but with the whole cultural and traditional system of the **Kgotla** decision-making process and its functions, including the role and power of the King. The missionaries thus having been exposed to the **Kgotla** system and kingship role, realised that Christianity could quickly penetrate the society through the heart and mind of the king. Christianity was thus given an indigenous welcome and status, an impetus necessary for its growth. For example MacKenzie wrote that Sekgoma did:

‘...attend missionary teaching... did not object to his sons being able to read and write ... indeed he was interested in their progress in these things and not infrequently asked Mr Mackenzie how they were getting on and only a few weeks since he seemed quite pleased on being told that several of them were able to write a letter in their own language.

That which he hates in their new manner of life is the principle which forbids their

⁶⁶. Also see ‘Our South African Ally - King Khama’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, London, October 21, 1893; *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, 34, Vol.5, N.S. 50, 1896, p.39. Kgobadi had preached at Sechele’s town of Dithubaruba in the 1850s.

⁶⁷ R. Moffat (Mahalapye) to LMS, September 5, 1859, SOAS: B31 F1 JA;

⁶⁸. Haccius, G., op cit, pp.326-8 in Isaac Schapera.

⁶⁹. Long, U (ed), (1956), *The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price, 1854-1883*, p.119.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.127.

adherence to many of their old customs.’⁷¹

This supports the main argument of this thesis that the Ngwato struggle was not against Christianity, or even western education, but against the attempt of the missionaries to uproot the converts from their cultural environment and impose foreign values and cultures.

Sekgoma’s chief goal in inviting missionaries had been to repair his prestige and re-establish the prosperity and stability of the state because he had found that a culturally based Christianity had benefited the BaKwena and their King, Sechele.

The missionaries’ ideological rejection of Ngwato culture was vividly illustrated in their physical isolation from the Ngwato community, in common with other Europeans. Thus, they closely identified themselves with western political power and material culture. They lived in large, European, tin-roofed houses, with wooden furniture and visited the neighbourhood by wagons. They, therefore, set a new pattern of living, in contrast with Ngwato grass - thatched huts made of mud or stones and did not share in the everyday experiences of the BaNgwato.⁷² The contrast with the approach taken, for example, by a twentieth century missionary of the Maryknoll order working in Tanzania is striking:

‘We, as religious are not called to live apart from other people, to live a life that separates us from them. Christ never gave us that example. Rather, we live in the midst of people, sharing suffering, longings and joys, conscious of the great mystery of sharing God’s life and love.... Our response to this call leads us to enter fully into the village community, to struggle through the daily, hard work of farming people, to experience insecurities together, to strive to improve the living conditions of all-not to live as a privileged class - but to cast our lot with the poor.’⁷³

This quotation stresses the fact that the role of culture in the growth of an indigenous Christianity cannot be overemphasised. To facilitate acquisition of the Ngwato thought patterns, values and language, which are important for communicating Christianity, the missionaries needed to share in the daily experiences of the people. However, this was precisely what they refused to do.

2.4. The Early Struggles For Authenticity

In this section we find that Sekgoma’s relation with missionaries were becoming increasingly bad. These missionaries who had dedicated their lives to missions were not impressed by his unwillingness to accept Christianity on their terms. On the other hand, Khama’s Christian piety was greatly praised

⁷¹. Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, May 1866, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA.

⁷². Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.247

⁷³ Quoted by Healey, J.G., *A Fifth Gospel: In Search of Black Christian Values*, p.78

by them. They, in fact, at times praised him out of proportion for his conversion to Christianity. This was so because his Christian character was seen by them as a result of the missionary's tutelage and most of all for his courage in his early struggles with his 'heathen and barbaric' father and king Sekgoma I. Obviously Sekgoma's heathenism, as shown in chapter one and in the succeeding sections, was exaggerated. Sekgoma's demands needed a sympathetic ear, which the missionaries never gave. Edwin Lloyd, for instance tells us that:

'(T)he issue between Sekhome and his Christian sons was clear. He wished them to give up their Christian principles, or at least, if they must be Christians, let them keep up the old native customs as well.'⁷⁴

In the same tone J.C. Harris says that in response to Sekgoma's pressures, Khama merely grew more determined in his:

'... sincere desire to apply what he felt to be the Christian spirit and ethic to the practical tests of human government.'⁷⁵

The missionaries were not going to allow an 'unscrupulous heathen' to be the King. They saw Khama as an impressive appropriation of western gentility, easily coping with European 'civilization', dressing in European clothes, eating at the table, with fork and knife without any difficulty.⁷⁶

Sekgoma's and Khama's approach to religion was, however, in essential agreement. That is, they both believed that religion existed in the people's minds, expressions and actions. But their response to Christianity, as we have and will illustrate, differed greatly. The missionaries' method and motives, therefore, drew Sekgoma into conflict with their teaching.

i). Sekgoma's Unwillingness to Accept Western Christianity

For the missionaries, Christianity meant the rejection of all that belonged to the past. In contrast, for the BaNgwato, acceptance of Christianity had to be associated with important cultural symbols, techniques and ideas which seemed appropriate to meeting their needs and which facilitated adjustments to the new situation. For example Sekgoma, whom the missionaries said was 'as heathenish, as savage as ever - ' was a wise and honoured politician, just and upright in his government,⁷⁷ and willing to embrace Christianity but wanted to bring his past life under the care of Christ, which the missionaries were against. He thus told James Chapman, a traveller and hunter who reached Shoshong in the early

⁷⁴. Lloyd, E., *Three Great African Chiefs*, (1895).

⁷⁵. Harris, J.C., (1922), *Khama, the Great African Chief*, p.67.

⁷⁶. Long, U. (1956), *op cit*, p.99; Mackenzie, J., *op cit* (1871), p.253.

⁷⁷. Long, U., (1965), *op. cit*, p.99.

1850s that:

'I should like to be a missionary, and to become a Christian, if I should be allowed to keep my wives. I don't want any more. I have transgressed, and nothing can ever undo that which has once been done; but I cannot turn my wives and children out. All men's hearts will be against me; I shall be alone on the earth. To have my wives disgraced and my legitimate children branded with a false and ignominious name, would bring overwhelming ruin and trouble without end upon me.'⁷⁸

The missionary's failure to relate Christianity to the Ngwato past conjured up a lot of uncertainties for Sekgoma and all the BaNgwato faced with that approach.⁷⁹ John Mackenzie also writes of how Sekgoma had been impressed by R.G. Cumming's preaching:

'He had often heard preaching since, but Sekgome's (sic) mind continued to be most impressed with the view of our religion which he had first heard as a novelty from his early instructor ... But it is likely that his story of the Gospel will remain in this chief's mind as long as he lives.'⁸⁰

The reason for Cumming's impact on Sekgoma may have been his down - to - earth preaching. As a hunter he knew experiences similar to those of the Ngwato, whose traditional religious practices permeated everyday issues of survival such as hunting, ploughing, drought, harvest and politics.

Sekgoma was evidently searching for a culturally relevant form of Christianity. It was for this reason that in 1851 Sekgoma again made a direct appeal to David Livingstone saying that:

'I wish you would change my heart, ... Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud and angry, angry always.'

However, Livingstone, at this time, also failed to meet Sekgoma's real need, which was to assure him that there was an alternative form of Christianity. Without helping him to cope with his struggles, he simply gave him a copy of the New Testament. Sekgoma interrupted saying:

'Nay, I wish to have it changed by medicine to drink, and have it changed at once, for it is very proud and very uneasy, and continually angry with someone. He then rose and went away.'⁸¹

This quotation also argues for a cultural identification, in that it sees Christianity as a concrete reality which transforms a person within his environment. The Ngwato religious practitioners for example, in addition to incantation, throwing of bones and prayers, also dealt in charms, something which might have dominated Sekgoma's religious experiences and expectations. However, when Livingstone failed

⁷⁸. Chapman, J., (1868), op. cit, p.220

⁷⁹. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, pp.379,409.

⁸⁰. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.407.

⁸¹. Seaver, (1957), *David Livingstone - His Life and Letters*, p.58.

to change his heart, Sekgoma remained searching all his life, so that many years later, when John MacKenzie challenged him:

‘... to enter the Word of God’, Sekgoma said: ‘Monare...you don’t know what you say. The Word of God is far from me,’ he compared that situation with: ‘... going out to the plain and meeting single-handed all the forces of Matebele.’⁸²

It seems to me that Sekgoma was afraid of embracing a missionary form of Christianity because he felt that it disarmed a man of all his cultural securities and made his future very uncertain. The old cultural rites shield people from their external threats. The words of Sir Seretse Khama, the first President of the Republic of Botswana were in agreement with this fact, when he pointed out that:

‘We were taught, to despise ourselves and our ways of life. We were made to believe that we had no past to speak of, no history to boast of, (our past was seen as) just a blank and nothing more. Only the present mattered and we had very little control over it ... It should now be our intention to try and retrieve what we can of our past. We should write our own history books, to prove that we did have a past, and that it was a past just as worth writing and learning about as any other. We must do this for the simple reason that a nation without a past is a lost nation and a people without a past is a people without a soul.’⁸³

The present can only be conceptualised in the light of the already known. The past is seen as guidance to the future. Becoming a Christian involves turning to a new life within a given material and spiritual environment. The past is an essential element of that environment which makes the conversion process meaningful.

What the missionaries failed to do was to present Christianity as a religion which takes care of people’s past and provides political and religious security. Such a culturally based Christianity would have transformed and enriched the cultural thought forms and heritage. Christianity does not necessarily denationalize or deculturalise a people. Despite Sekgoma’s understandable early struggles the missionaries continued their campaign against him, emphasizing his ‘heathenism’ or ‘barbarism’ out of proportion.

In what the missionaries saw as a struggle of the Christians to maintain their Christian position, the former took sides in support of Khama. The missionaries wanted to be ruled by a Christian King rather than a ‘heathen’ who they said worked everything to his own advantage. On the contrary Khama was easily coping with western civilization. For the missionaries this was a sign of progress.⁸⁴

⁸². Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.409.

⁸³. Sir Seretse Khama, *Botswana Daily News*, 19May 1970.

⁸⁴. U. Long, (1956), op. cit, p.99.

ii). The First Ngwato Converts

In the above sections I suggested that Sekgoma was initially happy to allow the missionaries to establish a Church at Shoshong, but Mackenzie tells us that:

‘That which he hates in their new manner of life is the principle which forbids their adherence to many of their old customs.’⁸⁵

In May 6, 1860 Sekgoma permitted Christoph Schulenburg to baptise nine converts, among whom were Khama and Kgamane, his eldest sons. This was the first ever such ceremony in Shoshong. In April 27, 1862, he again allowed more of his people to be baptised into Christianity by Price and Mackenzie. These included Tselametsi, Goitsewang (Keaise) and Baitlhopi Tshukudu and Seretse Sekgoma, Mogomotsi Manyedi (15/4/60), Mpedi Morapedi (15/4/60), Boetse Mogomotsi (25/5/62), and Lenole (4/3/60).⁸⁶ Sekgoma also allowed all his other many sons and wives to attend Church. What Sekgoma opposed was the expectation of the missionary that the Ngwato converts had to substitute their culture for western way of life.⁸⁷ For example, writing about Khama’s mother, Mrs Price said that: ‘She attends Divine services regularly and may be a secret disciple, though she dresses in heathen style’.⁸⁸

It must however be mentioned that Khama’s first personal encounter with Christianity is likely to have been through a Tswana teacher from Kudumane, rather than a white missionary. We have already mentioned that on his way to Ndebeleland in 1857, Robert Moffat had left evangelist Sehunelo among the Ngwato at Shoshong. Although Sehunelo’s impact and contribution was outstanding, Khama himself

‘... attribute(d) his adoption of faith (Christianity) to the teaching and example of Kgobadi, a native Christian.’⁸⁹

The early LMS missionary literature does not mention Kgobadi’s meeting with Khama, but we know that the evangelist was Ashton’s assistant at Dikgatlong Mission station and died in 1896 at the age of 80. Kgobadi must have preached at Dithubaruba, the Kwena capital, possibly at the same time when

⁸⁵ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, May 1866, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA.

⁸⁶ Price to LMS, Dinokane, Feb. 22, 1864, SOAS: B33 F2 JB. When Roger Price arrived in May and Mackenzie in June 1862, they found a congregation of about twenty people in the midst of a raging smallpox epidemic. Also see Smith, E.W., *Great Lion of Bechuanaland: The Life and Times of Roger Price, Missionary*, p.139.

⁸⁷ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.372.

⁸⁸ Long. U, (1956), op,cit, p.158.

⁸⁹ " Our South African Ally - King Khama,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, London, 21 Oct. 1893.

Sekgoma and his family were in exile in the early years of Khama's life.⁹⁰

The earliest Christians themselves saw their new spiritual experience within the confines of their culture. For example, they still identified with the traditional kingly authority, a factor which subsequently led to the recognition of Khama as the leader of the early Christian community.⁹¹ They also participated in **Kgotla** activities and continued its communal functions.

Another important element of Ngwato culture which the early converts were unwilling to give up was the set of rituals which played a central role in Ngwato life. They perpetuated the solidarity and permanence of the Ngwato state. They stressed the mutual obligations to one another. They were also seen as a technique for dealing with uncertainty about that which was beyond control in any critical situation of human life. The most important institutions were the **bogwera** and **bojale** rites. For the early converts, Christianity could draw valuable general guidance from that heritage. The Ngwato Christians also found that the ideas underlying their own rituals could be given a meaningful expression in their new community. For instance, the rituals of initiation were similar to baptism in that they demonstrated a public declaration of belonging and identity. At initiation, a Mongwato was given a new status by becoming a member of a regiment. The **bogwera** and **bojale** ceremonies meant that a young man or woman was removed from the sole control and training of the parents and joined a united body (**mophato**) with their own name and leader which assumed special communal responsibilities collectively. For example, the **bogwera** graduants formed the army in war and in peace and carried out such tasks as hunting and rounding up stray cattle.⁹² Similarly, at baptism a convert joined a new community, whose values they had to faithfully keep and uphold.

It should, therefore, be stressed that, in taking individual actions, the Ngwato early converts still accepted the fact that these had social implications. Their new experiences, which were surrounded by social influences and pressures, had new implications and demands, but were within the Ngwato cultural heritage. This meant that even though conversion demanded individual action, it still occurred in the old communal setting, governed by certain social values and norms.

The LMS missionaries generally expected their converts to adopt new names at baptism. However, the Ngwato Christians retained their Ngwato names, for example, while Goitsewang, Khama's wife was named Elizabeth at baptism, she was popularly known by her former name. The **bogwera** and **bojale**

⁹⁰. *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, 34/ vol. 5, N.S. 50, Feb, 1896, p.39.

⁹¹. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, pp.441-2.

⁹². Long, U (ed)., (1956), op cit, p.127; Also see *Apprenticeship at Kurumane*, p.xviii.

graduands were given a new name which implied new status and increased communal responsibility. Being a member of a regiment created a lifelong sense of belonging. This cultural element of community was carried by the Ngwato Christians into the Christian community in their struggle to make Christianity meaningful.⁹³

Even though the reasons for accepting Christianity were many and varied, people announced themselves as baptismal candidates on the basis of the positive strengths of Christianity, which found meaning in their culture. It offered material blessings such as education and also offered psychological aspects - security, belonging and identity, aspects which were culturally essential.⁹⁴ As is already evident from the above text, similarities in the purposes served by rituals were another vital influential factor for conversion to Christianity. From the view-point of the Ngwato converts, the baptismal rites were believed to offer divine protection, a role which the Ngwato rites had also played. This rite also symbolised community and oneness. It was available to all the converts - commoners such as Mabu (possibly Mavu), who was a Kalanga⁹⁵, a poor servant and an outcast,⁹⁶ women, children, men, aliens and nobles. Likewise the **bogwera** and **bojale** institutions welcomed all those who fell within a particular age, and could qualify to be members of a **mophato** after undergoing the necessary training. It was these similarities between Ngwato traditional rites and those of Christianity which subsequently offered a sense of belonging, security and identity which the BaNgwato found attractive in the new structure. So, then, the similarities between the traditional and Christian rites facilitated understanding and influenced the people's response to Christianity.

2.5. Sekgoma's Objection to Christianity

So far it is evident that by adopting a stance which rejected Ngwato culture, rather than seeking to develop and transform it, the missionaries forced upon the BaNgwato a difficult choice: either to accept Christianity and abandon their culture and past or to maintain their cultural heritage and reject Christianity. The Ngwato authorities had welcomed the missionaries with the hope that they would relate their teaching to the existing cultural context. Sekgoma and the Ngwato elders, faced with such

⁹³. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, pp.441-2.

⁹⁴. Karl Hohls (GHS) to Mackenzie, 8Sept 1864, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B33 F3 JB.

⁹⁵The Kalanga were historically and culturally different from the Tswana. As a splinter group of the Shona, they had different historical origins, and were also at one point ruled by Ndebele Kings, before the arrival of the missionaries. Attempts to evangelize them led to conflicts because they were in an area claimed by both the BaNgwato and Ndebele. See Chapter 4 for the last point.

⁹⁶. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, pp.263-4.

a difficult choice, resisted the missionaries' attitude to destroy certain Ngwato practices, which led to a succession of serious conflicts.

The Ngwato Christians were, however, engaged in a process of contextualizing Christianity. King Sekgoma himself had refused to embrace the western form of Christianity. As the custodian of Ngwato law, custom and institution, Sekgoma felt accountable for the welfare of the society. Indeed, Sekgoma felt that the weight of custom that had been in use from times immemorial was certainly more reassuring than a form of Christianity which seemed to be alien in its nature. It was for this reason that Sekgoma often told MacKenzie that accepting Christianity would be difficult to justify to his ancestors. For example MacKenzie tells us that in his struggles against some of the problems caused by missionary approach to both Christianity and Ngwato culture, Sekgoma pitifully cried saying: 'How should I answer to Khari, if I changed the customs of my town?'⁹⁷ The King was the preserver of custom and its intermediary to the royal **badimo**. However, to this MacKenzie argued that:

'Indeed it is impossible for you to live and die like your ancestors. You can never be like Khari; for he never refused the word of God, whereas you refuse it at present ... he would have probably believed ... if it had ever been made known to him ... live your own life, in the circumstances in which God has placed you; and not seek to live the life of an ancestor to whom these circumstances were unknown.'⁹⁸

The major problem for Sekgoma was the failure of the missionaries to present Christianity within his own cultural context. This forced him to remain on the border-line, because he found that the missionary approach addressed his main problem so vaguely, unrealistically and unhelpfully. He did not see any reason for abandoning the old structures for something he did not adequately understand. Sekgoma needed some form of explanation of the context of the new norms because alienating oneself from one's tradition created insecurity. To commit himself to such alien activities was difficult and frightening. His whole apparatus of traditional medicine had been a source of security but the missionaries were forbidding the use of diviners and thus shut off the whole of the Ngwato medical system without giving a clear alternative. This and many other practical questions remained unanswered. The missionaries did not try to understand why Sekgoma and the Ngwato old men resisted change nor did they attempt to evaluate their own methods of presenting the gospel. They instead intensified their condemnation of Ngwato culture and customs. Out of frustration and despair, Sekgoma resorted to preventing his people from attending missionary teaching. For example, Mackenzie in May 1866 wrote to LMS complaining that:

'Sekgoma never attended missionary teaching, and did what he could to prevent his

⁹⁷. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.397.

⁹⁸. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.397.

people doing so and was very critical of his sons' growing attachment to Christianity.'⁹⁹

However, both Sekgoma and the LMS missionaries acknowledged, in contrast, that Khama was the exemplar of Ngwato Christianity.¹⁰⁰ For example, Sekgoma openly admitted to John Mackenzie that Khama's heart was right and 'white'.¹⁰¹ This acknowledgement by both Sekgoma, who was continuously searching for authenticity, and the missionaries, who simply imposed their own form of Christianity, modelled by their western culture, indicated that there could be a Christianity developed along indigenous patterns.

Sekgoma's struggle to come to terms with Christianity, without having to abandon his past and culture, can also be seen in his willingness to discuss religious matters with the missionaries.¹⁰² It was their failure to relate his past experiences and way of life to the present which forced him to be on the defensive, telling the Bangwato: 'Let us walk in the old path of our fathers and swerve not to the right or to the left'.¹⁰³

Sekgoma's defensive response intensified the missionary-Ngwato conflict and the Ngwato search for a way to combine two traditions. This can be illustrated by five incidents which occurred during the period 1862 - 1871.

i). Medical Practices

The first clash was a conflict in 1862 over medical practices. Traditionally the King, assisted by the most powerful **dingaka** in the land, was associated with various religious attributes and responsibilities.¹⁰⁴ Much confidence was laid upon a **ngaka** by the community. He had to consult his patients regularly to check their progress and prescribe new medicine if necessary. In addition to his medical practice, he had to be in touch with the life of the community in the same way as everyone: cultivating land, looking after his cattle, repairing his huts etc. The society expected him to lead an

⁹⁹. Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, May 1866, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA.

¹⁰⁰. Price to LMS, Kudumane, 13Apr 1865: SOAS, In-letters, South Africa, B34 F1 JA.

¹⁰¹ Mackenzie, J., op cit, p408: white being the literal translation from tshweu implying cleanliness and spotless.

¹⁰². Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.408.

¹⁰³. Smith, E.W., (1957), op. cit, p.143.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid, p.147.

exemplary life. Michael Gelfand, regarding the functions of the **ngaka** observed that:

‘European society has no one quite like the ‘ngaka’, an individual to whom people can turn in every kind of difficulty. He is a doctor in sickness, a priest in religious matters, a lawyer in legal issues, a policeman in the detection and prevention of crime, a possessor of magical preparations which can increase the crops and instil special skills and talents into his clients.’¹⁰⁵

When MacKenzie arrived at Shoshong in 1862 he found the Ngwato in a raging epidemic of smallpox and drought.¹⁰⁶ Sekgoma hesitantly gave permission to Mackenzie to administer European vaccination, but the majority of the Ngwato population preferred the local medicine, due to its association with religious practices.¹⁰⁷ Sekgoma, who had been successfully cured of ulcers by Livingstone in May 1851,¹⁰⁸ also refused to take missionary pills and vaccinations, for two reasons. The first, and minor reason, was because he thought that this would revive the disease he had previously suffered from. The second, and more important, was the fact that the missionaries separated the spiritual from the physical in their healing practices.¹⁰⁹ However, this separation of the nineteenth century rationalism did not prevent MacKenzie from penetrating the Ngwato medical world.

By his dispensing of medicines Mackenzie, who also visited the sick in their homes, was immediately apprehended in the category of a **ngaka**, especially with the successful inoculation of Sekgoma’s sons and other members of the royal family and also the poor and the infirm.¹¹⁰ Mackenzie writes saying:

‘I began to find that my knowledge of medicine increased my influence with the people, and would be of real service to me as a missionary. The successful treatment of a case of fever in a near relative of Sekhome (sic) became widely known; and I found that the native doctors themselves came to me for advice.’¹¹¹

MacKenzie’s medical practice became very popular because the general Ngwato population saw the missionary as performing the role of a **ngaka** and apprehended him in that category. Despite this success and reputation ordinary people insisted that he should diagnose them with ditaola (bones) like

¹⁰⁵. Gelfand, M., (1954), *Witch Doctor*, p.55.

¹⁰⁶ In her journals Mrs Price reported how this virulent small-pox spread from Cape Town in September 1858: Long, U., op cit, p82. Also see Theal, G.M., *History of South Africa, 1846-60*, p.169. & Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.252-6.

¹⁰⁷. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.252.

¹⁰⁸ Livingstone, D., (1960), *David Livingstone’s Private Journals, 1851-56*, p.194.

¹⁰⁹. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.253.

¹¹⁰. Ibid, pp. 252-3.

¹¹¹. Ibid, p.265.

the traditional **dingaka**. The people claimed that the only difference between MacKenzie and their dingaka was that:

'He (ngaka) prayed to Him by the herbs and plants of the field, as his fathers had taught him; the white men were taught to pray from the books.'¹¹²

Some of the interesting stories described by MacKenzie express that the people desired a contextualized missionary medical approach. MacKenzie, for instance, wrote:

'An old man with weak eyes, hearing the cures of ophthalmia which had been effected by simple lotions, requested Sekgoma to introduce him to me. "Be your introducer," said the chief; "your eyes will speak for you; the teacher will be sure to give you 'eye-water'." The old man made his appearance at the door of our hut, and begged for medicine for his eyes. I gave him a lotion which did not colour the water in the cup, and told him how it was to be used. "But, Monare," said the man, "this is nothing but water." I told him to try it when he got home, and would find it was an eye-lotion. He laid down the cup in displeasure, remarking that he was an old man, and did not like to be a laughing - stock for a boy - meaning myself. So away he went to report in the court-yard how he had been slighted by the missionary, who would give him nothing to use for his eyes but pure water in a cup. The chief and several other head men at once saw the mistake which he had made, and sent him back again. "I am ordered to take away your water," said the man to me, meaning that he still adhered to his own opinion, but had been commanded to use the lotion by the chief. Wishing to enjoy his surprise, I now poured some into his eyes; and as he had been very opinionative, and expected only pure water, the amtness of the lotion was increased by the suddenness of his surprise. The value of an eye - lotion, in the estimation of Bechuanas, is in proportion to the pain it gives in the eye. The old went off to the court-yard with the cup in his hand, to show everybody how the white man had "charmed" pure water, and made it very "bogale" or powerful. His idea was, that if there was anything mixed in the water, it would be visible.'¹¹³

Another interesting story of a woman described by MacKenzie is as follows:

'Afraid that I had come to kill her, she darted past me like an arrow, and endeavoured to make off. She refused to take the medicine I prescribed until her attendants told her it was not mine but Sekgome's. As soon as she came to herself and found out who had been her benefactor, she was as lavish of her expressions of gratitude as she had formerly been of her curses.'¹¹⁴

The above quotation shows that although Sekgoma had himself refused to be inoculated, he was impressed by the missionary's medical practice, and encouraged his sick people to go for MacKenze's medical treatment. These people, such as the man who suffered from an eye disease, at first doubted the effectiveness of the missionary's medicine in the absence of **ditaola**. MacKenzie's success, however, made people to believe that he used charmed pure water.¹¹⁵

¹¹². Ibid, p.472.

¹¹³ J. MacKenzie, (1871), op. cit, p.266.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p.265.

¹¹⁵. Ibid, pp. 265-6.

Religion played a vital role in the Ngwato medical practice. The mistake made by some of the LMS missionaries was to attempt to introduce western medical practices of treating physical sickness in isolation. Indeed, the Christian claim is that the Gospel (eg.Lk.5.12-26) benefits the whole person's spirit, soul and body. This understanding of vitality and spiritual patterns would have been very attractive to the Ngwato Christians because of the striking similarities in the traditional religions. MacKenzie, like other missionaries, with the exception of Livingstone, displaced **dingaka** and could not share any institutional platform with them. This angered Sekgoma, who was the chief of the **dingaka tsa morafe** (national doctors), along with Pelotona Tidimane, a Mongwato of royal descent, who was his number one man.¹¹⁶ In sharp contrast, Livingstone, who acknowledged and advocated a partnership in medical practice, refused to by-pass the traditional doctors or western medical practices as the all-in-all. For example, in 1858 he advised Dr John Kirk that:

‘They possess medical men amongst themselves who are generally the most observant people to be met with. It is desirable to be at all times on good terms with them. In order to do this, slight complaints, ... ought to be referred to their care,... and no disparaging remark ever made on their previous treatment in the presence of the patient.’¹¹⁷

Livingstone encouraged **dingaka** to reveal their potential and remedies and tried some of their herbs himself. The evidence of Livingstone's partnership with African traditional doctors and his willingness to learn from them can be found in the David Livingstone Museum, in Blantyre, Scotland. Here, his doctor's case contains his surgical instruments together with various items and medical material used by the traditional doctors which he brought from Africa.¹¹⁸ However, Livingstone's concern was generally not a priority for most of the LMS missionaries working among the Ngwato during this period. The Ngwato religious concept for looking to the divine for fortification and security of property, livestock, seeds, land fertility, hunting, health, drought etc was very strong. Thus the failure of the missionary Church structure to provide for these needs led to insecurity.

It must also be noted that in the past young males, especially those belonging to the royal family were trained in matters of **bongaka** (medicine). However, with the coming of the missionaries, western literary education attracted a handful of young men, largely aristocrat and Christians. They would come

¹¹⁶ . He also ranked third in the kingdom, after King Sekgoma and Tshukudu. Mackenzie, J., op cit, pp. 415-6.

¹¹⁷ Fosket, R (ed)., (1964), *The Zambezi Doctors: Livingstone's Letters to John Kirk, 1858-72*, pp.43-4.

¹¹⁸ . *David Livingstone Museum*, Catalogue Nos. 273-305.

to Roger Price's and MacKenzie's house to learn writing, and reading till late in the evening.¹¹⁹ These lessons were largely scriptural in nature. This was subsequently seen by some of the young men as an alternative to the training of an heir in the highest arts of the **ngaka**, which partly influenced traditional political decisions. Khama and Kgamane themselves, for instance, at one point preferred taking literary education to cultural lessons in royal and priestly duties.

In summary therefore, the **bongaka** practice gives us other possible reasons why Sekgoma and his relatives might have chosen to seek the European teaching, when they first came into contact with it during their exile amongst the Kwenas as shown above. It was within their cognitive framework to consult religious experts (**dingaka**) in times of crisis. **Dingaka** were believed to restore peace with **badimo** who were guardians against all evil and against attacks from ill wishers. King Macheng having taken Sekgoma's political position might have sought to strengthen himself against the latter or even wished him death. Far away from their own close extended family and friends, they also found that Christianity provided a sense of community and safety.

The BaNgwato saw the practice and province of **dingaka** embracing many of their concerns. But now the missionary was seen as occupying a similar position in their respective functions. Just as they could come to the **ngaka** for help against spiritual forces, the BaNgwato may have seen the missionary playing that same role. Sekgoma himself, having been healed of his ulcers by Livingstone, may have seen a significant overlap in Ngwato and Christian conceptions of healing and remedy for suffering and evil. It may have been with this influence that Sekgoma, to begin with, allowed his sons, wife and brother-in-law to seek the guidance of the Lutheran missionaries, as if they were important **dingaka**, who could be consulted for strengthening. It was also with this in mind that one of the earliest recorded sermons by a Tswana evangelist, Diphukwe, implied that Christianity protected against malaria. When the people heard this they said:

'We expected to hear about white people and white people's customs and you spoke to us about our own customs and about ourselves - strange words such as we had never dreamed of hearing.'¹²⁰

Through his policy of importing foreign **dingaka** for certain national events, Sekgoma also saw Livingstone,¹²¹ not only as a religious teacher, but called him **ngaka**, because he taught and dispensed medicine as well.

¹¹⁹. Long, U., (1956), op. cit, pp. 145, 155.

¹²⁰. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op cit, p.47.

¹²¹. Seaver, (1957), op cit, p.58.

ii). War Rites

The second encounter and struggle for authenticity occurred in March 1863 when Ndebele warriors attacked Shoshong.¹²² The night before the Ngwato warriors were to confront the enemy, the Christians, led by Khama, called and organised a prayer meeting and invited John MacKenzie to pray for them. Concerning this MacKenzie wrote that:

‘About ten o’clock the young chiefs paid us a visit, with several of those who attended church and school - surrounded by whom I offered up prayer before our door in the bright moon-light.

I besought a blessing on those who fought for home and family and property; and prayed that God would frustrate the counsels of the nation delighting in war.... I said to Khame in parting...that those who feared God would be found to be the bravest in defense of all that was dear to them.’¹²³

This form of Christian ritual had striking similarities with their own traditional war rites and served the same purpose, the ceremonial observance of which was believed to protect and make the soldiers invincible.¹²⁴ Indeed, the Ngwato Christians were now relating Christianity to their cultural context in a meaningful way. As in previous religious practices, Christian rites were seen as providing security in moments of crisis. In the Ngwato tradition war was preceded by certain rites and in accordance, the Christians opted for prayer. It was, however, traditionally the King’s role to act as a ‘high-priest’ but he could also delegate one of his priests to perform the rite, which explains why the Christians confidently relied on the missionary.

As before the Christians saw themselves as part of the wider Ngwato community and were more than ever willing to fight under the command of Sekgoma in defence of their home and property.¹²⁵ For example Khama, in a stirring speech, roused his countrymen to resistance and determination by saying:

‘Bamangwato ... let us die today. Have we not been dying the death of women for years? Today let us die as men. Have we not seen our mothers killed before our eyes ... wives ... sisters ... daughters led away by our enemies?...infants thrown into the air and caught on the point of a Matabele spear? ... old man ...? This is worse than death! ... let us go and fight with these destroyers of our people and die like men!’¹²⁶

In his capacity as the ‘high-priest’ Sekgoma squatted on the ground and earnestly threw and studied his bones and repeated incantations. He then charmed his warriors before he could let them confront the enemy. Having already undergone the Christian ritual the Christians led by Khama refused to partake

¹²² Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, Chapter xiv.

¹²³ Ibid, pp.271-2.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.272.

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp.279-80.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.270



Fig.8

A Mokwena warrior, the spear was used for throwing and the battle-axe for hand fighting (From T. Tlou, (1984), p.71).

in the ritual charming of guns, spears, shields and warriors.¹²⁷ For example Mackenzie wrote that:

‘...the Bamangwato had assembled.... It seems there was a great deal of talking among the headmen and Sekhome (sic), who besides being chief is also a ‘ngaka’ (doctor or sorcerer), engaged earnestly in reading his die,¹²⁸ and repeating his incantations. He was interrupted by Khame, ... and that as for himself (Khame) he wished to fight and have done with it.... in his priestly character he had sustained, and immediately ordered out the two youngest...regiments...that of Khame and...Khamane.’¹²⁹

At this point the general Ngwato public also openly acknowledged the value of Christianity and the fact that it was possible for it to be presented in an indigenous form:

‘... people at once looked to Khama to deliver them from their danger.... ‘He is our prime warrior,’ the Bangwato acknowledged, and told each other that Khama’s acceptance of the Christian religion had not affected his military ability. Nor did it seem to have brought the Ngwato the displeasure of the ancestors.’¹³⁰

Khama’s ability to successfully apply Christianity to his responsibilities such as politics and war, made it very attractive, valuable and meaningful.

iii). Initiation Rites

The third major conflict between the missionaries and Ngwato culture resulted from the former’s rejection of the **bogwera** and **bojale** initiation ceremonies. These were some of the oldest and dearest of the Ngwato traditions. A young man could not take his place in the society unless he had undergone these rites. In March 16, 1865 John MacKenzie wrote to Miss E.B. Douglas of Portobello, saying that:

‘... [the] heathen rite of circumcision is now being celebrated here with great demonstrations.’¹³¹

The missionaries strongly opposed these celebrations and forced upon Sekgoma a choice between accepting Christianity and completely abandoning the **bogwera** and **bojale** initiation rites or going ahead with the rites and in their view, rejecting Christianity. This forced choice is clearly stated by MacKenzie who wrote to the LMS saying that:

‘There was (sic) two ways and two rites: the way of God’s Word and the way of heathenism; the rite of baptism and the rite of circumcision. Let all give up the one and adopt the other.’¹³²

¹²⁷. Dachs, A.J., (1973), p.155.

¹²⁸ The word die is misleading, for the diviner would have used bones and other magical substances.

¹²⁹. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.308.

¹³⁰. E. Lloyd, (1895), op cit, p.29ff in Dachs (1973), pp9-10.

¹³¹. W.D. Mackenzie, (1902), op cit, pp.101-2.

¹³². Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.378.

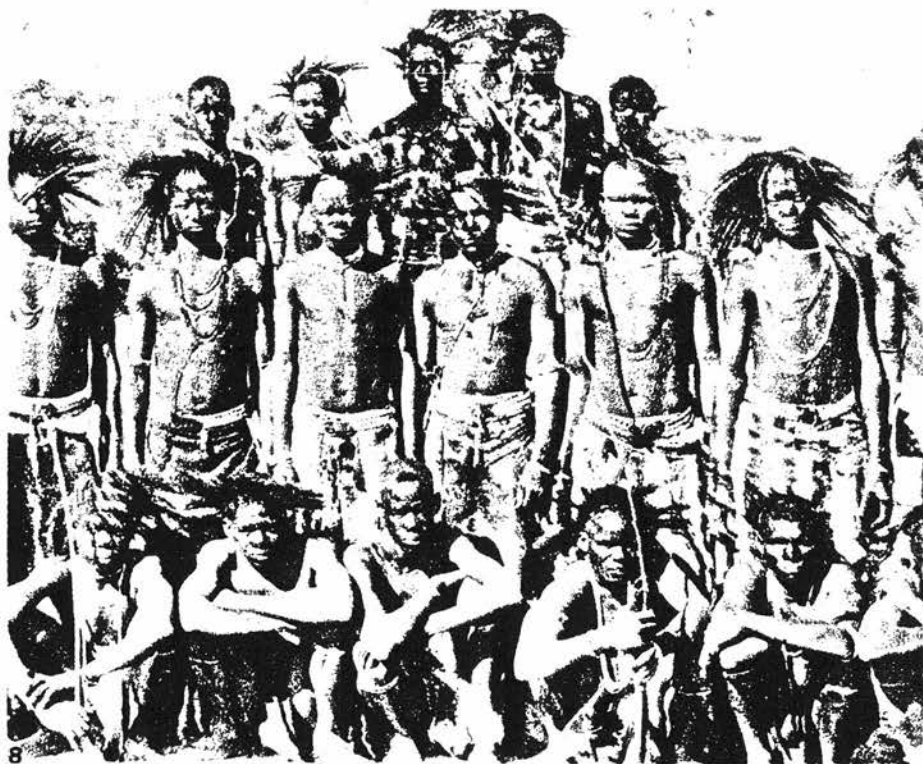


Fig.9

Bogwera (male initiation) in traditional dress.



Fig.10

Bojale (female initiates) in traditional dress.

This explains the real reasons for Sekgoma's response. He saw this as a compulsion rather than an option and it fuelled him into hostility against Christianity because he understood it to compel his people to discard certain cherished Ngwato customs. Neil Q. Parsons' explanation that the conflict originated from economic factors especially the Ngwato system for cattle ownership is not adequate.¹³³ Sekgoma was not drawn into this confrontation solely by his approach to Christianity, but by this imposed choice. Given the above options Sekgoma chose rather to see a continuation of these essential practices. He however did not officially reject Christianity nor hinder any one from becoming a Christian as long as this did not interfere with what he deemed to be of national interest.

It was a father's pride and source of distinctive honour to produce the largest family of sons during the **bogwera** ceremonies.¹³⁴ This was all the more important for Sekgoma because of his royal status. Sekgoma's sons however found that the choice for or against Christianity or **bogwera** was an imposed one and struggled to authentically merge the two. For example, Khama in particular believed that it was not a simple choice, but a struggle to live a Christian life within the Ngwato cultural context (see chapter3). This dilemma and search for authenticity is expressed in Mackenzie's letter to the LMS in 1872:

‘Sekgoma's mortification was therefore very great when he found himself marching to the camp alone - not one of his five eldest sons accompanying him. They were all at our school instead, and every Sunday they were in their places at Church.’¹³⁵

The missionaries themselves described **bogwera** as ‘barbaric’, ‘heathenism’, and ‘devilish’.¹³⁶ This increased Sekgoma's anger so much that MacKenzie wrote saying that he:

‘... shed tears in the presence of some of his sons, when expostulating with them on their desertion of him and of the old tribal customs.’¹³⁷

Sekgoma's defensive response to the choice forced upon him was turned into the use of threats and compulsion, out of which he won back two of his younger sons, Raditladi and Mphoeng, who joined the ceremonies which were already in progress. MacKenzie furiously condemned Sekgoma's enticing

¹³³ N.Q. Parsons, ‘The Economic History of Khama's country in Botswana, 1844 to 1930’, pp.113-143.

¹³⁴ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.411.

¹³⁵ Mackenzie to LMS, 2 Sept 1872, SOAS: In-Letters, S/A, B37 JA F1., also see Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.411.

¹³⁶ Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, pp. 125, 176, 236, 263; Also Mackenzie, (1871), op cit, pp. 375-8 : ‘... introduce the youth to heathen manhood ... heathen ceremony... way of heathenism...’

¹³⁷ Mackenzie, (1871), op cit, p.412; also see Mackenzie to LMS, May 1866, Shoshong, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA & Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 19March 1866 in W.D. Mackenzie, (1902), p.108.

appeal.¹³⁸ Out of frustration Sekgoma attempted to punish the missionaries by preventing his subjects from attending their teaching. Regarding this MacKenzie tells us that:

‘On Monday the chief would seek out some one who was perhaps halting between two opinions, and who had been attending Church on the Sunday. Taking him aside, Sekhome (sic) would ply him with threats of vengeance. As he exercised the office of priest as well as chief, he professed to be able and determined completely to blast and ruin the man unless he gave up attending Church and school.’¹³⁹

However, it must be restated that Sekgoma’s struggle was not against Christianity as such, but was against a form of Christianity laced with a foreign culture. In December 1863 Mrs Elizabeth Lees Price recorded in her Journals that the growing alienation from Ngwato culture, which the missionaries promoted worried Sekgoma. She also pointed out that:

‘[Sekgoma] - detests our teaching and religion because it constrains his otherwise dutiful and affectionate sons in some things to be disobedient and defiant to him.’¹⁴⁰

Traditionally, the role of religion was closely linked with the political, social and economic spheres of Ngwato life. Christianity was culturally expected to make Christians good citizens of their community.

iv). Marriage Practices

In early 1866 another conflict and struggle, which resulted from the missionary’s attempt to force a choice upon the BaNgwato, evolved around marriage practices. The missionary insistence on monogamy did not take into consideration some positive aspects of the Ngwato family structure. It is also surprising to find that in the LMS missionary correspondence of the period under consideration, none of the missionaries seem to have been aware of the striking similarity between the Old Testament (see Gen.6.1-8; 38.8-10) practices and the bridal wealth exchanges. In both the Old Testament and the Ngwato practices, an individual corporately shares the group life of the community by giving or receiving. The celebrations were seen as a communal event, of which the extended family and the community at large were actively a part. These ideas could have found expression in Ngwato culturally based Christianity since it would seek to support communal living and sharing. Sekgoma tried in vain to compel his sons to conform to polygamous marriages. Khama and Kgamane had each married one of two Christian sisters, Goitsewang¹⁴¹ and Baitlhopi Tshuhudu respectively.¹⁴² However, before

¹³⁸ Mackenzie, J. (1871), op. cit, p.108-9; J.M. to E.B. Douglas, Portobello, 16 March, 1865 in WD op cit, pp101-2

¹³⁹ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, pp.412-3.

¹⁴⁰ Long, U (ed)., (1956), op. cit, p.163.

¹⁴¹ Also known as Keaise and Mma-Bessie: a common habit of addressing parents after the names of their first children. Had also been named after Mrs Price, thus also known as Elizabetha. She lived with Khama as his wife for twenty-seven years and had several children by him.

this Sekgoma had negotiated a marriage for Khama with the daughter of a senior headman and a close friend of his, Pelotona, who was also a renowned **ngaka**. Mackenzie wrote to the LMS Directors that Sekgoma:

‘...had desired his eldest son to take to wife a daughter of Pelutona; but Khame had conceived a dislike to this person and refused. On their return to the place, Sekhome (sic) recommended him to marry a daughter of Chukuru, to whom they owed gratitude for his efforts in recalling them from banishment.’¹⁴³

However, in 1866 Sekgoma treated this first marriage as unofficial and insisted that Khama settle for a second wife, by marrying the woman he had chosen for him in 1858 as his senior wife. The prospect of strong ties with Pelotona who was a resourceful **ngaka** gave Sekgoma security in that critical moment.¹⁴⁴ Sekgoma turned to Pelotona as part of his struggle to defend the Ngwato culture against what he saw as an attack by the missionaries. However, unlike Sekgoma, who was possibly too defensive, Khama neither fought against Ngwato culture nor Christianity, but was open to growth. He therefore answered his father in the most respectful yet straightforward manner, saying:

‘On account of the Word of God, I refuse to take a second wife; but you know that I was always averse to this woman, having declined to receive her from you as my wife before I became a Christian. I thought you had given up the match. I understood you to say, before your mind was poisoned against me, that you were pleased with my present wife. Lay the hardest task upon me, send me to hunt elephants for ivory, put me to any service you can think of as taken of my obedience; but I cannot take the daughter of Pelutona to wife.’¹⁴⁵

The seriousness of this situation in which Khama was forced by the missionaries and his father to choose between two options, both of which were unfavourable and undesirable, is seen in that:

‘Although the daughter of Pelutona had been given to another man and had borne him two children, Sekhome (sic) swore that he must be his son’s head wife; he must take her or die. Khame pleaded that he was a Christian, and farther, that he never liked this woman. Sekhome (sic) answered, ‘when I sought missionaries for you, I had no idea that their teaching would thwart me thus; I thought you would just be taught to read and write, your habits remaining unchanged. But learn this: whether you like the woman or not, whether you are a Christian or not, I am your father, and am determined to exact obedience to my wishes. Either you or I must be master; and who ever heard of a father governed by his own son? What could I say to Khari and the rest of my ancestors if I succumbed to my own child? Father we obey you in all other matters;...only in matters connected with the Word of God we cannot obey you; we

¹⁴² Hepburn, J., (1895), op. cit, p.33; Also see *The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price*, p.128. Tshukudu was an important aristocrat, who in political status ranked next to Sekgoma.

¹⁴³ Mackenzie to the LMS, Shoshong, 19March, 1866 in M.D. Mackenzie, (1902), op cit, p.108.

¹⁴⁴ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, May 1866, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, E.W., (1957), op. cit, p.144.

fear God, and would rather die.'¹⁴⁶

The missionaries' unrelenting condemnation of **bojale**, rather than seeking to develop and transform it positively, not only compelled Sekgoma to respond defensively but also forced Kgamane, one of his elder sons to make a choice between Christianity and traditional culture. Faced with this dilemma, for or against Christianity or **bojale**, Kgamane successfully persuaded his betrothed, Baitlhopi not to undergo the rite. On July 20, 1863 Mrs Price reporting this incident said that:

'This year and this winter is the turn for a rite - a ceremony - among the girls akin to that circumcision among the boys which took place just last year. We do not understand it - only we know that no girl is considered a woman and fit for marriage until she has passed tho' this rite. Now Khamane - the young of the two princes - has a young lassie betrothed to him who is just the age for this rite, and against his father and her friends and his people, he stands out boldly and insists upon her keeping out of it.'¹⁴⁷

This was the first occurrence of its kind at Shoshong. According to tradition, the uninitiated woman was condemned to infertility and childlessness, the greatest calamity which could befall a wife, especially one of royal status. However, to the contrary she presented her husband with fine sons in due course.¹⁴⁸ Kgamane had found that Christianity was meaningful to his cultural context. Against the condemnation and threats of infertility, imposed by his own culture, it gave him security, confidence and a peace of mind.

Sometime in 1866 once again Sekgoma found himself in a difficult dilemma because of the missionary factor and he declared the Church a taboo - a no - go zone.¹⁴⁹ Those seen near the church premises became Sekgoma's enemies. But the Ngwato population refused the sanction¹⁵⁰ and challenged Sekgoma to seek ways of reconciling the habits of their forefathers and Christianity. The 'Word of God' had become a threatening factor to Sekgoma's kingly power. In order to rule without any opposition to his authority and with no Christianity to encourage his sons to rebel against his action he resorted to using charms against Khama, who seemed to be the ring leader of the Christians in his town. MacKenzie describes Sekgoma's desperate move saying:

'Khame awoke one night and was alarmed to find his premises lighted up as if on

¹⁴⁶ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 19Mar 1866 in M.D. Mackenzie, (1902), op. cit, pp.109-100.

¹⁴⁷ Long, U (ed), (1956), op. cit, p.128.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p.108.

¹⁴⁹ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.417.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp.418-9.

fire. On hastening outside he discovered the 'baloi' or wizards at their enchantment opposite the entrance to his house. They were casting plant after plant, charm after charm, into the fire, mumbling and muttering their dark prayers and curses as an accompaniment. Who would wonder if a shudder passed through the mind of the young man, to find the previously dreaded customs of his ancestors thus actively directed against him, the oldest son of the Chief?'¹⁵¹

When Sekgoma failed to get rid of these 'trouble makers' he tried to besiege them in their stronghold in the mountains where they had sought refuge.¹⁵² This struggle for religious authenticity became critical, so much so that Mackenzie tells us that he:

'...had a prospect before him on that Sabbath morning, the town in possession of the enemy of the Gospel, its friends compelled to take refuge on the mountains top. However, my course was plain; I knew where I could obtain a willing and attentive audience, and resolved to climb the mountains to minister to those who, I felt assured, would welcome both my message and myself...I went up and held a short service with my friends who stood around...with Testament and hymn-book in hand, but with gun and spear and shield.'¹⁵³

Sekgoma's attempt to preserve customary institutions was rebuffed by both the missionaries and traders.¹⁵⁴ They tried to compel Sekgoma and his supporters to give up their cultural heritage by supplying the Christians with arms and ammunition. The traders however opposed Ngwato traditions for a different reason. It was not due to their indifference on the religious aspects of Ngwato life, but because they feared that the rejection of western civilization and culture would generally not promote nor augur well for their business in Shoshong. In fact MacKenzie reports that he:

'... learned that two or three of the English men at present on the place had got involved in the fray, having shot for a time on Khame's side.'¹⁵⁵

Although Sekgoma was angered by this bias and mounted a great opposition to those aspects of missionary activity, which seemed inimical to Ngwato cultural heritage, he did not hinder the general missionary services. For instance Mackenzie told the Directors of the LMS that:

'... altho hooted and threatened and called by very disreputable names,... sulkily

¹⁵¹. Ibid, p.421.

¹⁵² Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.417-9; Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.4-5; Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, May 1866, B34 JA F1.

¹⁵³ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 19 Mar, 1866 in M.D. Mackenzie, (1902), op cit, pp.113-4.

¹⁵⁴ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 3 July 1866, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JA; Mackenzie, J., op cit, p.436.

¹⁵⁵. Ibid, p.113.

received by Sekome (sic) I continued to get his reluctant consent ... to preach to the poor people whom he had driven to the mountains.'¹⁵⁶

It was the anti-Ngwato cultural approach adopted by the missionaries which, more than anything else, forced Sekgoma to take such a defensive approach. The Ngwato King still highly valued the role played by Christianity and hoped for a culture oriented form of Christianity. Although Sekgoma himself had not gone far enough in his search for that type of an indigenous Christianity, the trend towards that direction began to emerge within the Ngwato society.

2.6. Signs of an Emerging Indigenous Church

In 1866 two things were clearly evident at Shoshong. First, the missionary form of Christianity had failed to transform or relate to the Ngwato cultural heritage. Their evangelising activities had however, inevitably undermined Kingly authority, which led to social instability. Secondly, Sekgoma, who initially welcomed the missionaries, had also failed to meaningfully reconcile the old and the new ideas. He found it very difficult to either control the missionaries or use Christianity positively to strengthen his position or to allow Christian growth to take indigenous forms. Despite Sekgoma's having been unsuccessful in developing an authentic indigenous form of Christianity, he seemed to have always been searching but never came to grips with reality, nor was he able to force the missionaries to seek to develop a teaching which would transform and maintain the positive aspects of their cultural heritage. The majority of the Ngwato population, however, forced Sekgoma to allow a transformation, accommodating both Christianity and Ngwato cultural heritage. When Sekgoma failed the test, partly due to missionary failure to promote that kind of a development, pressure mounted against him from both the missionaries and the Ngwato population so much so that in March 1866 he was replaced by Macheng.¹⁵⁷

Like Sekgoma, Macheng was initially favourable towards Christianity. He thought that it would strengthen and increase his spiritual and political power and also come to terms with the Ngwato heritage or even enrich it. For example MacKenzie wrote that Macheng was:

'...loud in his praises of the Word of God ... Macheng and Khame and Khamane were living together in harmony... [Macheng reiterated] since I arrived at Shoshong...I have seen and heard for myself. The people of the Word of God alone speak the truth.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 3July 1866 SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B34 F1 JB.

¹⁵⁷ Hepburn, J.D., (1871), op cit, p.2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.447.

Macheng soon discovered that for him to remain on good terms with the missionaries, he had to abandon all the Ngwato rituals such as rain-making, initiation etc. He also found that, while in the Ngwato tradition, the King was seen as the head of the religious, economic, political and social spheres, the missionaries reserved the religious priesthood for themselves. He interpreted this to mean that the missionaries were presenting themselves as an alternative authority. Again, by trying to weaken the instrumental and institutional structures of polygamy, initiation and rain-making, for example, they were threatening the ideological basis for Ngwato sources of authority and thus directly challenging Macheng's office. The religious, political and social laws and structures were seen to be divinely given, with the King as the senior earthly agent. These factors were therefore closely linked and tied with the **Kgotla** functions and duties of the King. This is why Macheng publicly complained one day at the **Kgotla** that:

'... there was now another Chief in the town - the Word of God: and that Macheng was not first in rank, but second.'¹⁵⁹

This single episode is typical of countless others which, during 1859-71 period complicated the relationship of the missionaries and Ngwato authorities. The former's attack on the Ngwato cultural systems made the latter very suspicious of their intentions.¹⁶⁰ This became so serious that when the missionaries insisted on a form of Christianity which alienated the Ngwato youth from their national responsibilities, Macheng, like Sekgoma, adopted a defensive response. He forced all the young men to spend Sundays either at his cattle-post looking after his cattle or at the **Kgotla** sewing his karosses. MacKenzie wrote that:

'... at last Seretse, a younger brother of Khame, openly declined to obey his orders - saying the skins had been set aside during the week in order that they might be produced on Sunday.'¹⁶¹

Hepburn also reported on the same incident that Macheng:

'... consequently abolished Sabbath observances. Macheng now openly persecuted the Christians, giving orders for certain regiments to go out to the veldt (country) to herd his cattle every Sunday, while others were ordered to appear at Khotla (chief's courtyard) to sew and bray skins of wild animals - anything to prevent the young people going to school or church.'¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B37 JA F1.

¹⁶⁰ Mackenzie, W.D., (1902), op. cit, pp.135-7.

¹⁶¹ Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 2Sept 1872, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B37 F1 JA.

¹⁶² Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.4; also see Hepburn to LMS, Shoshong, 20Apr 1875, SOAS: In-letters, S/A, B38 F1 JA for examples.

When the BaNgwato rejected such defensive responses adopted by Macheng, the latter reacted by introducing dictatorial and tyrannic methods of government which he had learnt during his captive days in Mziligazi's country.¹⁶³ The Ngwato population, however, resisted such an imposition of foreign ways. Whilst the missionaries agreed that Macheng's imposition of foreign ways was wrong, they did not see their methods of weakening Ngwato culture and forcing their western culture as equally undesirable.

In 1867, two interesting developments, pointing to the development of an indigenous Christianity, began to emerge. The first is in connection with the building of a massive Church during that year, a project which allowed the infant Church to demonstrate its ability to be self-supporting, one of the marks of an indigenous Church. The Ngwato population saw the project as theirs and eagerly contributed to its support. In accordance with Ngwato culture, Macheng had fully utilised the **bogwera** and **bojale** regiments to supply necessary labour and raw materials. Writing in 1871 MacKenzie acknowledged the substantial contributions made by the people:

'Macheng was kind enough to furnish me with two regiments of men to assist me in felling the timber.... again assisted me by ordering two regiments of women to cut bundles of grass for thatch.'¹⁶⁴

The Ngwato **letsema** system was in this way actively employed. **Letsema** was a symbol of co-operation, sharing and community. This system had its value and meaning in that people stressed achieving a lot together. This project enabled the Ngwato population to show its eagerness. MacKenzie tells us that in addition to supplying labour and raw materials, they also contributed capital. He wrote that they:

'... also gave ostrich feathers and cattle, so that only a small share of the cost of the building fell upon the Missionary Society.'¹⁶⁵

The BaNgwato did not have any difficulty with this because it fell within the confines of their culture. For example Schapera points out that:

'But every man owed certain forms of gifts and tribute to his kinsmen, neighbours and Chief, so that he worked to satisfy not only his own domestic needs, but also his obligations to others.'¹⁶⁶

In December 1867 a church, accommodating over 500 people, was completed.¹⁶⁷ However, since there

¹⁶³ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, chps xxi-xxiii.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.459-61.

¹⁶⁵ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, pp.459-61; also see Mackenzie to LMS, Shoshong, 27Jan, 1868, SOAS: In-letters, B35 F1 JA.

¹⁶⁶ Schapera, I., (1940), *Married Life in an African Tribe*, p.105

¹⁶⁷ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, pp.459-61.

were no pews,¹⁶⁸ people brought their own traditional stools or simply sat on the ground as was the practice in the **Kgotla**. When the Church was officially opened on the 7 January 1868, MacKenzie still believing that western culture was superior to Ngwato culture, praised those wearing European clothes as Christians, disparaged and derided those wearing traditional attire as heathen.¹⁶⁹ This shows that missionary thinking was dominated by European codes of ideas and civilization. Acceptance into that circle imposed a style of European living which was closely linked with Christianity. For example, in early 1862 Mrs Price also expressed this when she said:

‘We used sometimes (sic) to ask Kgama and his brother in to a meal, for they were always clean and dressed like gentlemen, with courteous gentlemen manners, and they were so often about us watching the building or other operations - or talking to father, anxious to learn, in every possible way.’¹⁷⁰

It was this missionary attitude which hindered the missionaries from seeing the need to invite the BaNgwato, so together they could search and find an indigenous expression of Christianity. The missionary arrogant, cultural assumption was that the BaNgwato had to be somehow made ready for salvation by being freed from their own culture, and ‘civilized’ by being compelled to accept European culture. This approach assumed that the BaNgwato were living in a more sin-filled, and grace-less environment than the pre-Christian Europe was. The contrast with the approach taken, for example, by Rolland Allen, a twentieth century missionary theorist is striking. Allen has pointed out that the first of the Apostle Paul’s converts among the Ephesians, for example, were predominantly those whose marriage details were unknown and who practised sexual immorality at its highest form.¹⁷¹ This shows that Christianity, regardless of differences in cultures, offers an equal possibility of acceptance anywhere in the world: Europe, Greece or Shoshong. If the message of Christianity for everyone is equal, as I believe it is, the task of the missionaries was simply to present the Gospel, as Christ suggested. This would have convicted the BaNgwato in their own environment. It was therefore necessary to peel off from the Gospel the western culture and to get to the most important part of the message of Christianity.

Also important was the way that the old men who came to see the building still expressed their ideas within their cultural context. Mackenzie wrote that on entering the building they uttered strange remarks:

‘... one man said, what a splendid place to drink beer in!’ Another: ‘What a capital pen for sheep and goats!’ And yet a third declared that: ‘... with a few people inside

¹⁶⁸ Loc cit.

¹⁶⁹ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.461-2; also Mackenzie to L.M.S., Shoshong, Jan 27, 1868: SOAS, In-Letters, B35 F1 JA.

¹⁷⁰ Long, U., (1956), op. cit, p.77

¹⁷¹ Allen, R., (1912), *Missionary Methods: St Paul’s or Ours?*, pp43,51.

they could defy the Matebele nation.¹⁷²

Again, expressing the need for Christianity, to relate to their cultural context, they complained that:

‘... they could see nothing in the words (Mackenzie’s preaching); they thought they had been called to Church to assist in praying for rain, and not to such strange doctrines.’¹⁷³

There was a practical need for Christianity to be related to the basic issues of day - to - day life: that is, soil fertility, agriculture, rain, hunting, upon which their survival depended. Indeed, Sekgoma himself excelled as a rain maker and this was the practice he found hardest to abandon. The Ngwato authorities thus found it easy to help the missionary build a church, school or to conform to the requirements of missionaries in several ways, as long as they did not take the people out of their culture. They expected to see Christianity making their material and spiritual environment more meaningful and secure.¹⁷⁴

The second development took place between the period 1868 and 1871 when John MacKenzie was away in England. Through the leadership of Khama the Church membership tremendously increased - more than in any year since the coming of the missionaries. This shows the importance of a self-propagating Church which needs to be part of the indigenisation process. In support of this Mackenzie observed that:

‘... the native Christians belonging to towns where no white missionary was settled, showed a higher average intelligence in Christian affairs than those living under the tutelage of an ordained European. It appears to be the case not only that the Church has that sustaining spiritual force within it which can maintain and multiply life even among the rudest peoples, where the Word of God is openly read and taught; but that sometimes the continual presence of an uneducated European retards the development of intelligence among an ignorant and unlettered people. The reason for the latter result probably is, that he comes to be regarded too much as an oracle whose every word is trusted, and whose assertion is taken as authoritative. Naturally the word of a local native teacher is more open to dispute, and is therefore more disputed. The friendly discussions which his teaching thus stimulates as well as guides, hasten the spiritual growth of the entire community.’¹⁷⁵

Associated with this was the contribution made by the Ngwato in the running of the schools. By 1865 Mrs Price reported that there were three regular schools in Shoshong and other smaller ones in the surrounding villages. There were also eight Ngwato volunteers teaching in these schools, all of whom were without western educational training, but did their work effectively.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷². Mackenzie to L.M.S, Shoshong, 27Jan 1868: SOAS, In-letters, South Africa, B35 F1 JA.

¹⁷³. Ibid. p.464.

¹⁷⁴ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, pp.135-7.

¹⁷⁵. Loc cit.

¹⁷⁶ Long, U., (1956), op. cit, p.162

It was the theory of the LMS that the indigenous Church would reach maturity and be self-propagating, but the missionaries never practically recognised the importance of the local evangelists, who were the main agents through which such a programme would have been achieved (see chapter 4). In fact the effectiveness of any missionary work can only be assessed by its commitment to the creation of an indigenous ministry, run and led by the local Christians with very little direct involvement of the European missionaries.

2.7. Summary

In conclusion, therefore, two things must be stressed. First, that the growth of Christianity, in this period, seems only to have been successful where an attempt was made to develop an authentic indigenous form. It failed both when it was purely western and when it was thoroughly compromised by the existing practices. The major problem here was the fact that the missionary's task, especially his idea of Church-planting limited the initiative of the local Christians. The missionary came from another already existing Church, of which he was himself an image, and tried to establish a carbon-copy of that Church in the mission field.

Second, was the forced choice for or against Christianity or cultural heritage which hindered the development of an authentic Christianity based on Ngwato culture. For example in support of this Mackenzie wrote that:

‘At Shoshong the opposition to the Gospel has always been based upon this feeling. It is not that the people cannot comprehend what is preached to them, but that they prefer the customs in which they have been brought up.’¹⁷⁷

However, although this may also mean that people were unwilling to give up unchristian customs, this piece of evidence points to some form of Christianity which would have been more appealing while remaining authentic to its ideals.

John Stott has described the marks of cultural dialogue as authenticity, humility, integrity and sensitivity.¹⁷⁸ In this process participants need to stand alongside each other to look at the truth together. An adoption of a confrontational stance, the imposition of one's own culture, or a defensive approach will not allow the truth to be exposed or lead us to mutual understanding. A two way traffic in ideas helps people to genuinely listen and understand each other, a thing which may result in rapid growth.

Christianity does not turn its back on the geographical and cultural setting of the people. The attempt

¹⁷⁷ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.397.

¹⁷⁸ Stott, J., (1977), *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp.71f.

to do so can only weaken the future prospect of Christianity, whilst a positive attitude becomes its source of strength. A missionary needs to be sensitive to the forces at play in a culture, and to all things which contributed to the people's social and cultural development. This approach differs from that of the historians I have cited above, because some of their attitudes were biased against Christianity's influence in the society.

Again, it must be stressed that the missionary's task is only to present Christ, not his own culture. It is in preaching Christ and his message, that the Church is built, although it may not be in the form he had in mind. Once he has presented Christ, the missionary should leave the people hearing his message to apply it to their own situation. He should also leave all the options open, because the people may either accept the message or reject it entirely. If they accept it, they obviously need guidance to establish a Church of their own, but nothing should be imposed upon them since the future of that Church will depend on their free-will and commitment. Christianity, by its very essence, is a message that can be accepted or rejected. If there is no possibility for that, then, Christianity has no meaning or value. Although the process of turning to Christ is not automatic, the presentation should be so appealing and compelling that people will see the value and decide in favour of it. Their response may certainly be found to be different from what the missionary had expected or what he is used to. The essential thing is that they must believe in **Modimo** through Christ, and also allow him to take control of their past and present. Again, as the example of the Ngwato shows they must not keep their new experience to themselves but should, go forth and witness to others.

That Church, based on free and open choices, and on the people's cultural heritage rather than a western form of Christianity was bound to rapidly grow to maturity. This chapter has shown that, by the 1870s the Ngwato Kingdom had sustained a continuous interaction with Europeans, so much that the European impact upon Ngwato socio-political life was clearly manifesting. The missionary education had greatly undermined and interfered with the traditional educational activities. Missionaries refused to recognise that traditional schools had trained Ngwato youths in vital arts of warfare, homecraft, hunting and farming. Despite this new force, a special feature of a Ngwato type of Christianity began to emerge. The Ngwato response to European ideas shows that there was a great attempt to balance between the old ideas and the new forces. Despite a strong presence of a conservative feeling, the general Ngwato response to missionary ideas and Christianity shows that there was a tendency to strike a balance and allow the two modes of life - the old and the new to live in harmony as way of creating societal stability. In all this the kingship factor played a major role in influencing the response of the new converts in seeking a balance between the two modes. This factor was crucial in shaping the development of the new Ngwato church.

The succeeding chapter deals with the period 1872-89 when Khama III demonstrated that Christianity could take a particular cultural form without betraying its authenticity.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. The Ngwato Contribution to the Early Development of Indigenous Christianity, 1871-1889

3.1. Introduction

Chapter two defined the methods and approaches adopted by the missionaries of the period 1857 to 1871. Their key evangelical strategy was to compel the Ngwato people to either abandon their cultural heritage and accept that alien type of Christianity or else choose their cultural heritage and then reject Christianity. However, the BaNgwato rejected this forced choice, because it was impossible for them to alienate themselves from their culture. It must also be mentioned that one of the important facts of that period is that it marked the existence of a Christian Church for the first time in history, among the BaNgwato.

Reading the LMS missionary correspondence of the period in question (1871 - 1889) and other related sources, one finds that Christianity can enrich an indigenous culture, if it is appropriately and carefully introduced. From these records, it is evident that relating Christianity to the existing culture facilitated the spread and growth of the Christian Church among the BaNgwato. Rapid growth was in fact greatest where the people themselves acted autonomously or with little hinderance from the European missionaries. This observation is in accordance with the words of Ngugi Wa' Thiongo, one of the leading African writers who observed that:

‘A religion that took no account of people’s way of life, a religion that did not recognise spots of beauty and truth in their way of life, was useless. It would not satisfy. It would not be a living experience, a source of life and vitality. It would only maim a man’s soul.’¹⁷⁹

A process of reinterpretation of Christianity, in the light of the Ngwato cultural context, made Christianity a living and dynamic experience for the people. This type of Christianity, which was developing among the Ngwato people, provoked and provided new questions and answers, which though rooted in the culture of that people, introduced new cultural implications. This significant process of transformation however adapted cultural techniques, forms, ideas and functions.

The first factor which played a vital role in the initial response to Christianity was the question of kingly authority and its inter-related institutions. Isaac Schapera describes the importance of this

¹⁷⁹. Ngugi W.T., (1965) *The River Between*.

traditional function as follows:

'The chief is the head of the tribe, occupies a position of unique privilege and authority. He is the symbol of tribal unity, the central figure round whom the tribal life evolves ... he is greatly honoured and respected, and always treated with a good deal of outward respect.'¹⁸⁰

The second factor which determined the nature of Ngwato response to the development of their Christianity was a set of socio-cultural rituals; the agricultural, initiatory and rain rites. Closely related to the initiatory rites, is the third factor dealing with the traditional educational systems of which the **bogwera** and **bojale** schools were the most important.

Although the BaNgwato strongly resisted a foreign type of Christianity, some religious and moral discontinuities set in. Even then this, process shows that the BaNgwato wanted to see their new religious experience taking their cultural context into consideration. Although the LMS missionaries wanted this experience to be conceived in terms of their own European experience, they made an immense contribution in the development of the Ngwato Christianity. Their most important contribution was in the area of translation. They translated the scripture, tracts, songs etc and produced a wide range of Setswana literature. This move put the word of God into the hands of the Batswana, in their own language. The missionaries also made an outstanding contribution in the realm of politics and education as shown in the following pages. Despite this very important contribution by the European missionaries, the Ngwato Christians led by Khama, were a key factor of the development of Christianity in Ngwatoland. This point became the most fundamental factor in the development of Christianity for many years.

3.2. Ngwato Tradition Versus Christianity: Khama's Transformations

i). The Cultural Environment

The whole question of Ngwato culture became a fundamental factor in the development of Christianity because these people could not envisage a religious experience outside their own culture. One of the most striking responses in the history of Ngwato Christianity was that the new converts adapted missionary religious teaching to their own cultural experiences. Refusing to be limited by the methods and approaches of the missionaries, they tried to put their own experiences and understanding of Christianity into practice. This provoked a wide range of new theological thinking and questions. The following examples of the Ngwato Christians' response to the message brought by the missionaries was fascinating.

¹⁸⁰ Schapera, I., (1970) *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, p. 62.



3.3. Traditional Power Structures

The two cultural structures which either facilitated Ngwato responses to the spread of Christianity or hindered that process was the office of kingship and the **Kgotla** institution. In the past the **Kgotla** was the focal point of Ngwato religious, political and social activities.¹⁸¹ One of the most important responsibilities of the King was to preside over this highest legislative, executive and judicial institution. In this, he was assisted by influential **dingaka** and headmen, most of whom were his uncles and brothers. Regarding this, John MacKenzie observed that:

‘The "bogosi" or chieftainship is hereditary among the Bechuanas. A chief generally unites in his own person the offices of king, supreme judge, commander-in-chief, and high priest....’¹⁸²

Again, he says that:

‘As ngaka or priest, the chief is supported by a class of men (lingaka) who not only practice the art of healing but are professors ... and have taken degrees in rain-making.’¹⁸³

Sekgoma himself exercised the functions belonging to all these offices and was thought by his admirers to excel in them.¹⁸⁴ Of Sekgoma’s experience MacKenzie wrote:

‘Sekhome (sic) exercised the functions belonging to all these offices, and was held by his admirers to excel in them all Every important matter is supposed to be decided before the pitsho or public assembly of the freemen of the town The chief knows how far he can go in a certain course before the pitsho takes place,’¹⁸⁵

Traditionally, the King was believed to be the people’s mediator with **badimo**, and thus naturally endowed with certain divine powers. This personality of the King, and the belief that he derived divine authority from the royal ancestry, was the guiding principle to national prosperity and security. Through this the King had the authority to preside as chief officiant at the rain making rites, seed-cleansing rites, first-fruit ceremony and initiation rites which solely depended upon this relationship with **badimo**.¹⁸⁶ The old men, who were seen as the backbone of the kingdom, time and again checked every religious and political procedure to ensure the preservation of the ways and customs passed to them by their

¹⁸¹. Mackenzie, J., (1871) op. cit, p.371; Moffat, R., (1842) op. cit, p.230.

¹⁸². MacKenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.371.

¹⁸³. Ibid, p.381.

¹⁸⁴ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op cit, p.371

¹⁸⁵. Ibid, p.371.

¹⁸⁶. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, chp xix; Hepburn., J.D., (1895), op. cit. pp.17-8.

forefathers. W.C. Willoughby, in relation to this aspect, wrote:

'It is not unusual to hear a chief say, in objecting to some course of action that is proposed to him: "How will I meet my father (or grandfather) if I do that.'" Such a phrase presupposes an unpleasant experience in the spirit-world for one who has wasted his patrimony, broken up his tribe, or sacrificed the domain that his ancestors won.'¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, T. J. Brown, another LMS missionary among the Batswana in the 1890s wrote:

'Every road traversed, every enquiry entered upon, every trace followed, whether of the tribal life, or of custom or rite or ceremony, lands one at the cave of Lowe from which, in the days when the rocks were still plastic and took impressions of the feet that trod on them, the Bechuana issued forth with all the rites, ceremonies and customs they have today.'¹⁸⁸

When interviewed by the South African Native Enquiry Commission in September 1901, Khama himself insisted that his people were inalienably attached to their cultural laws, customs and past. The interview runs as follows:

'Interviewer: "You are a Christian?"

Khama: "Yes."

Interviewer: "Do I understand that the people are wedded to their customs and would not like to see them changed hurriedly?"

Khama: "The Laws and customs which we have now are the laws and customs which our fathers had before us and as far as they go we are satisfied with them. As regards new laws, I am unable to say how the people would receive them, as I myself do not know what those laws would be like."¹⁸⁹

Having undergone training in Tswana tradition, Khama recognised that kingship represented a cultural heritage handed down by a long line ancestry of kings and could not ignore that custom.¹⁹⁰ MacKenzie, however, attributed lack of progress to the force of cultural reproduction vested in the indigenous socio-political order, saying:

'On the whole, the feudal power of the native chiefs is opposed to Christianity; and the people who are living under English law are in a far more advantageous position as to the reception of the Gospel than when they were living in their own heathen towns surrounded by all its thralls and sanctions.'¹⁹¹

In their effort to advance the course of Christianity, the missionaries generally tried to erode not only

¹⁸⁷ Willoughby, W.C., (1828) *Soul of the Bantu*, p.390.

¹⁸⁸ . Brown, T.J., 'Circumcision Rites of the Bechuana Tribes', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institution* 51, (1921), p.419.

¹⁸⁹ . *South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-5, vol.iv, Minutes of Evidence*, 'Chief Khama Examined', 15 Sept 1901, Minute Nos 37, 347-37, 348, p.251.

¹⁹⁰ . Hepburn, J.D., (1895), *op. cit.* p.125.

¹⁹¹ . J. Mackenzie (Travelling to Kudumane from Shoshong), to L.M.S., August, 1876, S.O.A.S: B38 F3 JC.

the spiritual aspect of kingship, but its entire foundations. They did this, amongst the Barolong, the southernmost Tswana people, when the Wesleyans saw the Tswana kingly authority as opposed to the authority of Christ, and therefore tried to weaken it.¹⁹² However, in contrast to this missionary approach, it is evident that the traditional power structure of kingship and its related functions remained the key factor in the spread of Christianity.

In the following pages we find that while there were other material sources of kingly power such as economic prosperity and wealth, the authority vested in the kingly office was largely religious. The King's exclusive access to divine power allowed him to have control over the most powerful **dingaka** in the land. The latter were ideally the most knowledgeable and in command of the most powerful medicines, believed to have the ability to avert national disasters. Subsequently, the key factor of Christianity developed from this cultural construction of kingly authority. The kingly office became of considerable importance to the initial Christian response to the message brought by the European missionaries. Khama's strategy, which was influenced by his Ngwato culture, was to tie his kingship to the religious institution and its agents. In this way the Church did not only become a source of strength, but enabled him to ensure that the prosperity and security of the kingdom was sustained.

3.4. Khama's Installation to Kingship

Having got rid of Sekgoma,¹⁹³ Macheng had found Khama and the significant number of young adherents to Christianity, a challenge rather than supportive of his rule.¹⁹⁴ As we have already seen he complained that:

'... there was now another chief in the town - the word of God: and that Macheng was not first in rank, but second.'¹⁹⁵

It was out of this desperation that Macheng compelled all the Christian young men to spend their Sundays dressing his skins and at his cattle-posts, rather than going to Church. Sechele, who was himself a Christian Kwena King, got involved and supported the Christians in defeating Macheng. Following this drama MacKenzie, for instance, wrote:

'We have another revolution. Khame is at present Chief of the Bamangwato. Macheng has followed Sekgoma into exile.'¹⁹⁶

¹⁹². Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, T.J., (1986), *Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa*, pp.4-5.

¹⁹³See chp two.

¹⁹⁴ J. Hepburn, (1895), *op. cit*, pp.14-7

¹⁹⁵. Mackenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, September 2, 1872, S.O.A.S.: B37 F1 JA.

¹⁹⁶. Ibid.

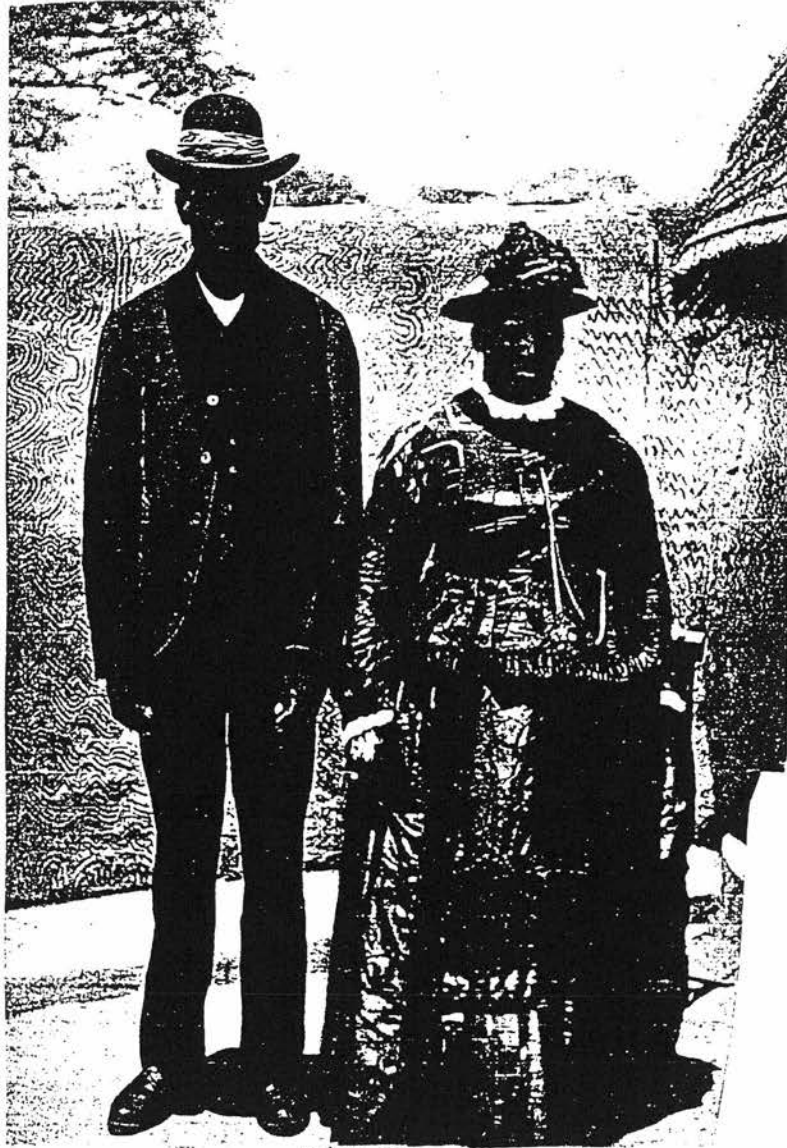


Fig.11

Khama and his wife Mma-Bessie in 1889. She died in same year soon after the Ngwato settled at their new town of Palapye. (Africa Pictures (L.M.S.) - from S.O.A.S.)



Fig.12

The King Khama (top) in the early years of his rule, when he faced many internal and external challenges.

(From J.D. Hepburn, (1895) p. 15.)

Shoshong (bottom) in 1880. King Khama's **Kgotla** is middle.

(LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS.)

He again wrote: 'we all hailed the change with great gratitude and delight'. In the absence of Sekgoma, Khama had, at the end of 1872, become the rightful heir to kingship. He had been elected into the post in accordance with popular **Kgotla** proceedings.¹⁹⁷ This process marked the beginning of a struggle to try to relate Christianity to the existing Ngwato culture.

The actual public development began in September 1872 when, Khama had accepted the responsibility of kingship and was inaugurated into the office. A few weeks later a major political and religious challenge took place. Khama was approached by a group of leading headmen, who requested him to conduct certain rituals, specifically, a ritual inaugurating the seed-time. Culturally, the King was not only part of this ceremony, but was its chief officiant. It could not proceed without his blessing and participation.¹⁹⁸ Khama responded to this challenge by tying his kingship to both Christianity and its leading agents. In consultation with his resident missionaries, MacKenzie and Hepburn, and his Ngwato subjects, he organised a huge Christian service in the **Kgotla**. In this arrangement, religion was the focal point of kingship structure. The kingly structures were themselves believed to carry supernatural powers and Khama now saw Christianity as capable of bestowing that upon him. The procedures for inaugurating a new King at the **Kgotla** into kingship was itself carried out with certain elaborate rituals, which carried great religious and political significance. It was at this cultural institution, the **Kgotla**, that symbol of kingly power, at which Khama stated 'his unwavering determination to adhere to Christianity.' He announced that:

'... he did not prohibit heathen ceremonies; but they must not be performed in the kgotla; and as chief he would contribute nothing towards them. The service in which the missionary was about to be engaged was his "letsemma"; after it they might all dig whenever they pleased, whoever wished to have his seed charmed, or his garden, could do so at his own expense ... Khame's speech was well received There followed a religious service, ... we sang ... the 100th Psalm, I read the 33rd and the 65th Psalms and we engaged in prayer in which reference was made to our special circumstances'¹⁹⁹

This famous and forceful announcement made by Khama, at his installation, officially recognised Christianity as a state religion.²⁰⁰ It launched and outlined the policy of his new government, and also earmarked the beginning of a new religious and political era. In the next fifty years, Khama vigorously implemented this policy, with its enormous significance to the extension of the Christian faith in that

¹⁹⁷. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, pp.14-20.

¹⁹⁸. Mackenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, September 2, 1872, SOAS: B37 F1 JA.

¹⁹⁹. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.38; also see Mackenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, September 2, 1872, SOAS, B37 F1 JA.

²⁰⁰. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, pp.17-8; 124.

period.²⁰¹ What gave Khama's announcement the right of acceptance was the position a King occupied in Ngwato cultural heritage. Supported by this inherent authority, Khama now endeavoured to develop the Ngwato Christianity as part of the indigenous institutions. By borrowing concepts both from his culture and Christianity he formulated his political ideology, which formed the basis of his government for many years. The result of this was that Church leadership became dominated by aristocrats and men of high social standing, such as Khama's cousins, half brothers and uncles. Most of these aristocrats or close relations of Khama became Church deacons and evangelists. Despite the dominance of this class, evidence shows that Christianity became very popular with the majority of the population as a result of that structure. The missionary records also indicate that Khama's efforts to try to relate Christianity to the day - to - day life of the Ngwato people led to an increase in Church membership.

3.5. Kgotla Procedures

Another striking occurrence at the inauguration of Khama's kingship, was in connection with rituals which normally preceded the installation of the King. These rituals were usually conducted by the national **dingaka**, headmen and elders, but on this occasion, Khama involved the European missionaries, who were assisted by the most powerful headmen and elders, such as Raditladi, Khama's half-brother, Kgamane, his own younger brother and Kgati, the son of Pelotona Tidimane, Sekgoma's chief **ngaka**.²⁰²

This new role of the white missionary, the headmen and former **dingaka** in **Kgotla** procedures was cordially accepted by the Ngwato assembly because the whole thing perpetuated the traditional functions. Christianity was therefore presented as an alternative source of security and power structure, but done so within the already existing cultural worldview. The role of the Christian headmen and former **dingaka**, for instance, made Christianity more meaningful and acceptable to the Ngwato population. While they had become Christians, they were still seen as fulfilling their cultural roles.

Henceforth, the **Kgotla** activities began with a morning prayer conducted by Khama himself, assisted by the deacons and European missionaries. Khama, in fact, went as far as persuading his local headmen to adopt the same procedures in their own village **Dikgotla** (plural for **Kgotla**). Writing about this transformation, Hepburn said:

'Very early in the morning he is up and about his work.
First thing in the morning, the people are gathered in the khotla, or courtyard of the King's house for prayer - a custom which is followed by the (sic) several headmen

²⁰¹ Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op cit, p.9.

²⁰² J.D. Hepburn (Shoshong) to LMS, January 12, 1885, SOAS: B43 F1 JA.



Fig.13

King Khama and his headmen in about 1882. Khama is seating on his royal. Note the leopard seat cover - insigma of royal power and kingship.

(LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS)

& J. Harris (1922) facing p. 24.)

in charge of the several divisions of the town.²⁰³

In 1887 a serious conflict broke out, when the BaSeleka King, became very defiant to these reforms.²⁰⁴ Despite this rebellion in some quarters, this indigenous form of Christianity became a symbol of authority for Khama and most of his headmen, and thus very popular. In 1880, Hepburn reported that Khama's efforts to express Christianity within the Ngwato cultural forms, was followed by tremendous Church growth. To facilitate this growth, Khama also conducted Bible studies and prayer meetings in his own house on a weekly basis.

It must be mentioned that this response to Christianity was largely due to the importance the people put in the authority of the King.

3.6. New Sources of Authority

Throughout his government, Khama saw Christianity and the L.M.S. missionaries, as well as the Ngwato past and its cultural tradition, as a key factor of his kingdom. The Church came to support the institution of kingship, which provided them security in times of political conflict and economic disasters such as drought. To them, therefore, Christianity developed as an intrinsic part of their lives. In the pre-missionary period, for instance, religious beliefs themselves, were mixed up with the fabric of social existence. It was for this reason that in this missionary period the Ngwato tried to diffuse Christianity and live it through the fabric of their social context. Christianity was, therefore, not to be departmentalised or restricted to Bible reading, hymn singing or prayers, but to penetrate every area of life - relationships, property and expressions.

It was in the bringing together of the spiritual and material domain or unifying of the Church and state that Khama, in his reign, found Christianity to provide immense divine authority to his kingship. The overlapping strands of Ngwato thought forms continued into the new religious practice. As in the past, Khama established his own ideological supremacy within it. As we have stated above, in the pre-missionary period, kingly power had depended upon the supernatural power. It was in performing religious rituals that enormous powers were imparted to a King. This necessitated a close link between the royal ancestry, the popular and most powerful national **dingaka** and the King, to ensure that there was stability, security and prosperity in the land. Khama, therefore, maintained a strong link with his most spiritual leaders, which included the European missionary and local Church deacons, thus making

²⁰³. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, 318-9.

²⁰⁴Ibid

Christianity the basis of his new kingship ideology of power. He also did this by inaugurating his kingship at the **Kgotla** by an elaborate Christian service, and by performing prayers every morning in his **Kgotla**.

The **Kgotla** institution was a dominant feature at the heart of Ngwato public life. Being its chief officiant, the King naturally became the most powerful man in the land. It was here that the King imparted new information and promulgated new laws or any other public business. It was within this understanding that Khama was ordained into kingship with a huge Church service. In doing this, Khama continued the link which, for the Ngwato, was indissoluble, that is, between the religious power and kingly legitimacy. The link suggested that Khama's **puso** (government) - unified the domains of religion and politics, and Christianity and kingship, as was in the past. In this way, then, Christianity strengthened the basis of his office as the traditional beliefs had done in the past.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the acceptance of Christianity by most Tswana Kings was generally characterised by the loss of their following and led to a split of the population, especially, if they changed their views drastically. At his conversion to Christianity, Sechele, King of the Bakwena, for instance, was deserted by almost the whole population, especially when he refused to make rain or to officiate in the **bogwera** initiation ceremonies.²⁰⁵ The Tlhaping people, who feared that the missionaries would change their old customs, when forced by their king Mothibi Molehabangwe to reside with the missionaries, also split into two, with the other party deserting him forever. This was so because Christianity was presented as a foreign factor, which opposed major Tswana customs and its past. However, the response was different for BaNgwato because of Khama's ability to relate Christianity to the people's way of life, make it a living experience and a source of life and vitality. He saw that the traditional leaders played a vital role, and that they were essential in the development of the indigenous leadership, which would contribute towards the interpretation process. This was important for two reasons; the first being that the missionary, as an individual and foreigner, could not have accomplished much, and secondly, that initiative tended to have lasting effects if it came from the indigenous leaders.

Christianity, therefore, represented a range of measures, which could be used in coping with forces considered to be beyond human direct control. This is why the BaNgwato saw Christianity, not only as operating within the cultural definition of kingly authority, but also ensuring a privileged access to the Supernatural realm. So the fact that Christianity could provide a link with the Supernatural, did not only become a source of strength to Khama, but also had striking similarities with Ngwato religious

²⁰⁵. Livingstone, D., (1857), op. cit, p.16.

concepts. This cultural factor, therefore, played a very important role, which would not have entirely depended upon material factors. It was this relationship the people attached to him and the notion of **badimo**, in the people's minds, which seemed to give him a more stable authority. Traditionally, the King was believed to have the utmost privileged position and exclusive access to the most senior national **badimo**. It was him who could pray and sacrifice to them, on behalf of the entire population. This indispensable role of the King did not only stem from his exclusive right to appeal to the **badimo**, but also the active interest taken by them in the recurrent rule, in that they are seen as passing their instructions to the King.

The implications of the King's acceptance of Christianity, therefore, was never treated lightly by both the BaNgwato and the missionaries. At baptism, and especially when he became part of the Church leadership, he culturally had committed not only himself to adhere to the rules of the Church, but the entire society. The LMS missionaries, for instance, expected Khama neither to participate in public customary rituals, nor allow them to be performed in his town. In fact, they called him to actually destroy every institution they saw as promoting such rituals. This is why we find that the collective commitment to Christianity by the kingly membership, in the missionary Church, often generated the most serious conflicts. Nevertheless, the argument advanced by such historians as Sillery, that the missionaries created a complete discontinuity between the Tswana cultural tradition and Christianity,²⁰⁶ and the alleged loss of the spiritual aspects of Khama's kingly power, needs to be redefined. Even amongst those Kings who suffered most, the loss of cultural institutions was possibly superficial. In the case of Khama, there is, in fact, no evidence indicating that people started to look upon him as a radically different being, just because of his acceptance of Christianity. He was in many ways as forceful as his predecessors and with no less authority. Instead of diminishing his spiritual kingly powers, Khama managed to adapt Christianity to his scope of religious activity. This worked in support of the basic ideas upon which kingly authority was found. Khama was seen as legitimately occupying that kingly office by virtue of his being Sekgoma's son and therefore, the most senior offspring of the kingly **badimo**, which was believed to bring prosperity and societal harmony and stability.

By adapting the Ngwato traditional rites to Christianity, Khama gained a broad popular recognition as King.

3.7. Ngwato Traditional Rites

We have seen that Khama, despite frequent challenges from his critics, subsequently inaugurated his kingship, and also formulated his new policies as a Christian King but within his Ngwato culture.

²⁰⁶ Sillery, A., (1954), *Sechele*, p.44.

September, however, being the beginning of the rain season, gave the Ngwato old men another opportunity to test his policies. Regarding this John MacKenzie tells us that:

'A few days later (after) Khama accepted kingship, events soon transpired which showed that his new position would be one of great difficulty.... They had meant no offence on him in their suggesting - they know only one course - the one they had recommended.... It was the beginning of the ploughing season, which was done with a ritual ceremony. It was unheard of for people to simply go and dig without any ceremony.'²⁰⁷

Seeing that the ideas and functions embodied in these traditional Ngwato rituals, were in themselves, of great relevance and significance to the role of Christianity, Khama responded by introducing appropriate Christian rites. Like the kingly authority and the **Kgotla** structures, which were in no conflict with Christianity, he found these public rituals to have a positive meaning in themselves. Agreeing with Khama's approach, MacKenzie told the LMS Directors that:

'... the ideas embodied in the heathen ceremonies were themselves good Why then should not a Christian Chief issue his 'letsema'- inaugurate the seed-time in his own town- by public prayer to Almighty God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth? And why should not such a chief 'loma' in the time of harvest, - with thanksgiving and praise to Him who crowneth the year with His goodness?''²⁰⁸

MacKenzie was himself very co-operative and supportive in helping Khama to develop a form of Christianity which would relate to Ngwato specific circumstances. In his sermon cited above, which was subsequently published in the *Chronicle of the London Missionary Society* of 1873, MacKenzie aimed at establishing the suitability of Christianity to that particular need. While, traditionally, the Ngwato attributed drought to the anger of the **badimo**, MacKenzie prayed at Khama's **Kgotla** and asked **Modimo** to increase the fertility of the land and crops, and also provide rain. The Ngwato population accepted that prayer, like the traditional rites, would avert natural disasters such as drought and diseases, which frequently affected crops, livestock and human life. Therefore, both their traditional rituals and Christian prayers were seen as having protective measures.²⁰⁹

In support of this approach, Niebuhr H. Richard has also observed that Jesus can be seen as:

'...the fulfilment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor is continuous with social life and its culture... Christ is, indeed, a Christ of culture, but he is also above culture.'²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Mackenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, September 2, 1872, SOAS: B37 F1 JA.

²⁰⁸ Loc. cit; Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.125.

²⁰⁹ Willoughby, W.C., (1928), *The Soul of the Bantu*, p.213.

²¹⁰ Niebuhr, H.R., (1952), *Christ and Culture*, p.42.

In this way Christianity, like the traditional religious rites, became a source of religious, political, social and economic security.

In the next section we will look at the impact made by a series of traditional rituals - such as rain-making rites, agricultural rites and initiatory rites, which clearly illustrate the impact of Christianity and the response of the BaNgwato.

i). Rain-Making Rites

One of the main responsibilities of the King was to ensure the supply of rain. Some Kings, such as Sekgoma, were prominent rainmakers themselves²¹¹ but most of them still depended on the expertise of their national **dingaka**. Any medicine handled by kingly **dingaka** was believed to have an added strength and blessing from **badimo**. The latter were themselves believed to cause the fertility and prosperity of the people and also to constrain diseases and hailstorms. Much, really, depended upon the King's ability to communicate with his **badimo**. In his observations of this, W.C. Willoughby found that the mediatory role of the King was the focus in the rain-making rites. He wrote:

'None but the paramount chief could preside over this ritual ... he, being the senior surviving representative of the line, is the natural priest of his fathers, who are the tutelary deities of the tribe ... As the people become increasingly apprehensive of the lateness of the rains, a subordinate chief of some importance would bring a black ox to the paramount at sunrise one morning, saying, "I have come to beg rain, chief, with this calf!". The paramount, having assented by replying, "May the rain fall!", would call in his expert in the rain rites, and the ox would be sprinkled with "medicated" water and set free to wander where it would.'²¹²

At the beginning of every rain season the national **dingaka** were generally very busy, working hard to combat drought, which was frequent in Southern Africa. Their activities were described by MacKenzie as follows:

'At this season the lingaka are frequently to be seen on the height of the mountains near to the town, lighting their fires, blowing their horns, whistling and shouting. They have also numerous processions, and a multitude of observances, which indeed take up their time.'²¹³

Paying homage to **badimo** in the process of rain-making was what the missionaries opposed. Although **Modimo** was believed to be the sole rain giver these **dingaka** frequently featured their ancestors in their prayers. Willoughby's Tswana informants, for instance, told him that:

'None but the Supreme Spirit can send rain; but their prayers for rain are addressed to the spirits of the ruling dynasty, who intercede for them at the court of One too

²¹¹ It is however, misleading to call them rain-makers, as if that were their only task. This was one of the numerous duties which they undertook to perform.

²¹² Willoughby, W.C., (1928), op cit, p.204.

²¹³ Mackenzie, J., op cit, p385

great to be approached by mortals.’²¹⁴

In addition to these rites being held at a prominent spot, normally the burial place of a famous King, they were characterised by some form of divination, praise poems and songs in reverence to that ancestor were recited. The missionaries were horrified by the activities of these rain-makers, who tried to undermine their teaching. In the following quotation Willoughby gave an example of such a typical rain-making occasion:

‘From the tribal herds, choice had been made of a black bull, without blemish or trace of colour, which after being given water to drink, was slaughtered at the grave. Many small fires were lit around the sacred spot, and the flesh of the victim was roasted. Of this sacrificial meal the chief was the first to partake, and after him, in strict order of precedence, each man, woman, and child in the throng had a morsel. It was necessary that every scrap of the sacramental food should be consumed on the spot... Then the people stood, and worshipped, under the presidency of their chief, intoning the praise - songs of their dead chiefs and saying, ‘we have come to beg rain by means of this ox, O chief, our Father!’ The rain-songs were chanted; and the people dispensed with a great shout, ‘rain! rain! chief we are dead - we are your people! Let the rain fall!’ As they wondered their way homeward, they continued to make the welkin ring with their rain-songs; and ... on the evening of that same day there was a drenching rain.’²¹⁵

In one of the very severe droughts, when MacKenzie was resident missionary at Shoshong, the rituals were held at King Mathiba’s (1780-1895) grave, who was the most celebrated of all the Ngwato rulers then.²¹⁶ The skilful and courageous reign of this royal ancestor was still fresh in their memories, and thus, he was revered as an agent of **Modimo**. In that position, he was seen as having power to ensure the good ordering of social relationships among the biological living, the fertility of the land and the general well being of the society as a whole: its crops, herds and the physical health of the people. To benefit from this protective measure, which they believed ensured good physical health and economic prosperity, the BaNgwato always endeavoured to preserve a harmonious relationship with these powerful royal ancestors.²¹⁷ In conclusion of his observation, Willoughby wrote saying:

‘And so they pray to the spirits of their ancestors who have gone forward into the town of the Great Chief of the spirit world.’²¹⁸

In this hierarchically organised procedure the King was not only the principal rain-maker, but always the chief officiant. MacKenzie, who was the first and longest serving LMS missionary during

²¹⁴ Willoughby, W.C., op cit, p.206f

²¹⁵ Willoughby, W.C., (1928), *The Soul of the Bantu*, pp.209.

²¹⁶ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, pp.357-8.

²¹⁷ Schapera, I., (1953), *The Tswana*, p.59

²¹⁸ Willoughby, W.C., (1923), *Race Problems in the New Africa*, p.78.

Sekgoma's reign, observed that there was another important element to these occurrences: the role of the **ngaka**. Even such experts as Sekgoma, who were themselves prominent rain-makers, still had the most influential **dingaka tsa morafe** (national rain-makers) supporting them. These kingly doctors were believed to possess, not only the most powerful medicine in the land, but added strength and blessings of the badimo. MacKenzie, therefore, stresses the importance of this partnership:

‘As ngaka or priest the chief is supported by a class of men (dingaka) who not only practise the art of healing but are professors of witchcraft, and have taken degrees in rain-making. In Shoshong there are a good many of this influential class.’²¹⁹

The last, but not least aspect of the rain-making procedure was the thanksgiving ceremony. This, as MacKenzie described it occurred immediately after the first rains had fallen:

‘After copious rains had fallen, an offering of joy and thanksgiving is placed in the most crowded street of the town, consisting of two or three large dishes filled with the rain-water, and with certain herbs and charms. In the evenings, the town, which had been hushed under the calamity of drought, now resounds with boisterous dance, which is carried on in almost every little kotla or court yard. The little children gather on the street, and shout and sing and clap their hands for joy. The dingaka, and the old men generally, show their gladness in a quieter if not more sober fashion, informing their wives that they must not be stingy any more with the corn for the beer.’²²⁰

Khama exploited this kingly factor, its set of ideas and model and engaged in the Christianization of these traditional rituals. In this transformation Khama, himself, his headmen and the European missionary occupied or at times claimed a privileged access to and assistance from **Modimo**, by virtue of their command over the gospel and as well as their ability to read, write and pray. By winning the Church and its foreign and indigenous leadership, Khama had not only brought Christianity under his political power, but also the white men's material prominence and weaponry.

In times of extreme crisis, the people could focus the meaning of existence on **Modimo**. And whenever the crisis was accepted as the work of **Modimo**, it could be restored if all lived in harmony with Him.

When the old men challenged Khama to make rain, in order to avert drought, starvation and hunger, he responded to these realities by installing a national day of prayer, which henceforth, became an annual event known as **Thapelo Ya Pula**.²²¹ Writing about one of the first **Thapelo Ya Pula**, Hepburn reports that:

‘We commenced our week of prayer together early on the Sunday morning. At this

²¹⁹. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.381.

²²⁰ Ibid, p.388.

²²¹. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.122.

meeting it was announced that the week was to be spent in prayer to God.²²²

During the **Thapelo Ya Pula** week, local communities and the neighbouring villages came to the capital for the occasion, as had always been done in the past. As at other traditional **Kgotla** meetings, the King officiated at the rain prayer proceedings, assisted by the European missionary and Ngwato evangelists and Church deacons. This was in accordance with Ngwato tradition, in that whether a King was a rain-maker or not, he always worked with a team of religious experts. Khama, following this pattern, thus, closely co-operated with this team of foreign and indigenous church leaders. While they directly appealed to **Modimo** rather than **badimo**, their functions had striking similarities to that of the rain-maker. In his officiating capacity Khama was seen as acting in keeping with his traditional office and with the authority of kingship.

The class of headmen who assisted Khama in these **Thapelo Tsa Pula** were themselves men of high and respected status in the society. Having been both aristocrats and Church deacons, their respectability and dignity was, therefore, heavily influenced by their broad knowledge and wisdom of the cultural past. Whenever **Modimo** was involved, they played an important advisory role. Their intervention was therefore essential. Such men as Gogakgosi (Oakotse), Raditladi, Seretse and Kgamane, were not only close relatives of Khama and outstanding headmen in their own right, but were also among the first converts, who formed the innercircle of the original Church membership and leadership, as well as its lay preachers. Others such as Kuate (Kgate), who was not only the son of that famous **ngaka**, Pelotona Tidimane, Sekgoma's closest friend and companion in rain-making matters, but was also amongst the first indigenous evangelists to preach outside the borders of the Ngwato territory.²²³ Some of these occupied that high status in the new order, because of their traditional offices. The former rain-makers, for instance, were able to play a significant role in the contextualisation of Christianity, because they were seen as having completed their training in aspects of **bongaka** (medicine), such as rain-making. Traditionally, they were already **dingaka**, who had acquired varied wisdom and knowledge. From the time of their original qualification, **badimo** were seen to have favoured them with success in their practice. While they had acquired such skills and expertise, and experience which saw them taking special trips to practise in other regions, they were still involved in other occupations of life such as hunting, ploughing and looking after their own cattle. This background shaped their general outlook (of their new role) as evangelists.

The traditional structure not only made the **Thapelo Ya Pula** readily acceptable as a fulfilment of the cultural roles and functions, but also made Christianity more popular, meaningful and attractive, even

²²². Ibid, p.132.

²²³. J.D. Hepburn (Shoshong) to LMS, January 12, 1885, SOAS: B43 F1 JA.

to its critics.

Traditionally, the rain-making rites started early in the morning at about 5 am, a procedure which was followed by the **Thapelo Ya Pula** meetings.²²⁴ The performance of such Christian rituals brought thousands to the **Kgotla**, including women and children, who were normally left out during other **Kgotla** gatherings of the town, especially those dealing with war rites, hunting and other political affairs. Indeed, the **Thapelo Ya Pula** meetings became the most popular Church services of the year.

The involvement of the European missionary, as Khama's confidant and assistant in performing these prayers and other matters, had serious implications. While the missionaries acted on Khama's authority, they were popularly seen as functioning as masters of the new religious order. Like in the traditional **bongaka** school, whereby arrangements for apprenticeship of the young doctors to a particular **ngaka** was the practice, indigenous evangelists also paid frequent visits to the European missionary, in order to consult and learn new insights into problems encountered within their practice. In the end, they themselves became so highly accomplished in Church matters, that they were sought after as experienced masters, by those who took interest in learning that profession.

Although the missionaries had latitude in conducting Bible readings, preaching and choosing texts, it was Khama himself who, frequently, did the opening prayers and speeches. The choice of the text, it must be said, was always influenced by the nature of the service, that is, it was closely linked to the material and spiritual needs of the people. In this, John MacKenzie was the first and most capable Ngwato resident missionary. In his September 1872 sermon, for instance, we saw that he successfully presented Christianity as an answer to the people's socio-economic problems and needs. In this sermon, he told the **Kgotla** meeting that **Modimo** was not only capable of providing abundant rain, but could also improve land fertility and the productivity of seeds.

The Ngwato subjects still insisted on Khama as their proper religious mediator. They were fully convinced that whenever there was drought, he could pray to **Modimo** effectively because he was believed to be endowed with supernatural power. He could, accordingly, ask for rain and it would come immediately. This shows that they continued to recognize the special supernatural powers, bestowed upon kingship by tradition, when Khama declared his intention to be a Christian King. This had been made possible because of Khama's approach, in relating Christianity to the Ngwato cultural context. His success in Christianizing the rain-making rites, strengthened the reproduction of the cultural premises upon which the kingly authority was based. It is also evident that long after the death of

²²⁴ E. Lloyd (Shoshong) to LMS, January 13, 1889, SOAS: B46 F1 JA.

Khama, who had ruled as a Christian King, the BaNgwato still took for granted the fact that he had the capability to make rain. For example in 1934 and 1935, subsequently, that is almost ten years after Khama's death, Schapera's informants could still express the view that Khama's presence at the **thapelo ya pula** meetings guaranteed rain, saying:

'Khama was blessed by God; whenever he prayed for rain in the morning, it was sure to fall that very afternoon or evening.'

And that:

'He used to hold prayers for rain in the kgotla of his father Sekgoma, and when he prayed for rain it used to rain quickly (kapela).'²²⁵

Similarly, whenever there was drought Khama was frequently blamed, for refusing to ask for rain from **Modimo**. The persistent problems of drought in Southern Africa made rain an important issue. This meant that there was frequent conflict between the missionaries and **dingaka**. This was due to the fact that, having displaced the **dingaka**, the missionaries could not agree to sharing powers with them, but tried to destroy and replace the **bongaka** office, an attitude which greatly angered Sekgoma who was himself a chief **ngaka**. During Khama's reign, however, Christianity began to play a key part in **Kgotla** procedures, a development which led to **dingaka tsa morafe** (national doctors) being replaced by missionaries and Ngwato evangelists. A drastic transformation was, however, taking place, in that writing, reading and missionary teaching became the content of the new training which replaced the training which was in the past given in the art of **dingaka**. Even then, for the Ngwato population, it was not the technicalities of rain-making or the **Thapelo Ya Pula** rites that mattered, but rain. When Robert Moffat was, for instance, invited by the Batlhaping. They simply saw him as one of their rain makers and thus invited him saying:

'You must come and make rain for us' and when Hamilton went to preach there it heavily rained after, he had preached there: "and as it had rained very heavily during his visit, he was viewed in the very imposing right of a rain-maker, they having requested him to pray for rain, which he did.'²²⁶

It is, therefore, evident from this that a missionary who was successful in his **Thapelo Tsa pula**, was normally viewed in the category of a **ngaka**. In 1868, for instance, the failure to relate Christianity to the problems of drought, led to a decline in Church membership. When the old men subsequently came to Church, MacKenzie wrote that:

'... they could see nothing in the words - they thought they had been called to Church to assist in praying for rain, and not to listen to strange doctrines.'²²⁷

Christianity needed to address and relate to the specific material and spiritual needs of the people. Failure to do so created a problem. Whenever there was a failure to do so there was often a tendency

²²⁵. Schapera, (1971), *Rain-making Rites of the Tswana Tribes*, p.140.

²²⁶ Moffat, R., (1842), *op. cit*, p.338.

²²⁷. J. Mackenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, January 27, 1868, SOAS: B35 F1 JA.

to revert to the old customs. For example, Moffat tells us that at Kudumane:

'... the young females gladly sang Poola (sic) round the town, the men cheerfully submitted to be washed with infusion of bulbs in water....'²²⁸

This reversion to the old practices was always common where missionaries had failed to relate their message to the problems of drought. People needed some form of religious security on this matter.

In the aftermath of the Ndebele war, food shortages and livestock deaths due to drought which had arrived in the whole of Southern Africa in 1876 and 1883 subsequently, the people demanded that Khama should produce rain. In the former year, in particular, pressure mounted from all sides, even from outside the Ngwato region. In that year, for instance, not only did Khama's Ngwato critics insist on inviting experts in rain-making from the north and east, but Lobengula, the successor to Mzilikazi, the King of the Ndebele, invited Khama for a joint rain-making venture, in order to bring that disastrous drought to an end. Khama refused:

'... and sent back the message, that Lobengula was only giving himself trouble for the mountain's god²²⁹ for nothing, and that if Lobengula believed in him, he Khama did not. He could not see how 'a god who ate porridge like himself could be of any use to him'.²³⁰

In 1883, again, an interesting episode occurred, when a group of influential old men came together in one fashion and resolved to employ the services of a devotee of **Mwari**, the god of the Matopo Hills to the north. This was the same cult Khama referred to as 'a god who ate porridge like myself' in the above quotation. In response to the invitation, a Kalanga rain maker suddenly appeared in Shoshong in full regalia and attempted to gain a foothold in the town. This was made possible by the fact that by the 1850s it had already an expanding resident Kalanga - speaking population, who had strong allegiances to that god.²³¹ Despite, Khama's disapproval, this prominent rain maker, began to work in the mountains of Shoshong, challenging the idea of prayer for rain, conducted by Khama, the European missionary and his people at the **Kgotla**, exclaiming that:

'[Mwali]... was angry, and was going to give us no more rain, because all these years he had given it, and Khama would not acknowledge him.... So the god of the mountains has determined to give us no more rain, and his rain-maker is here to tell us so. He says we [missionaries] have driven away by our prayers the clouds which

²²⁸ Moffat to Alexander Moffat in *Apprenticeship at Kurumane*.

²²⁹ This refers to the ngwali cult, the god of the Matopo hills, a subject which is being presently researched by a competent Motswana (Ph D Manchester University). Obed Kealotswe's work on the 'Head Mountain of God' (University of Edinburgh, Ph D, 1993) gives more details on this subject. M.L. Daneel's work, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, and his major work, *Old and New in Shona Independent Churches*, are very important in this subject.

²³⁰ Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.137.

²³¹ Willoughby, W.C., (1928), op. cit, p.275.



Fig.14

View of part of Shoshong where the meetings of rain-making were held.

(LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS;
also in J.D. Hepburn, (1895) p. 133.)

he had brought!'²³²

Khama, however, refused to co-operate with that rain-maker and told his people that they were free to do what they liked. At the same time, in consultation with his resident missionary and the majority of the Shoshong population he mounted a week of **Thapelo Tsa Pula** meetings to defend against the activities of the devotee of **Mwali**. In this way, Khama brought Christianity into direct contest with the Kalanga rain-maker, by means of preaching, prayer and hymn singing. The participating resident missionary, Hepburn said of this:

'What I say, Bamangwato, is that God has heard our prayers from the first day till now. He sent away the empty clouds that contained no rain, and that floated high in the sky last Sunday morning, when we commenced to pray to him; and all the week we have been praying, and all the week God's sun has been making rain for us; and now this last Sunday evening, as we have prayed our last prayers, the rain clouds have gathered on the mountains across the valley, and I have watched them all the time, and here they come. The wind blows in an opposite direction, and the Makalaka rain doctor and the Makalaka god of the mountains cannot tell us he knows how that is.'

Let him tell you if he knows, and let him stop the rain if he can.... that night it rained... and the people talked about it, and about the Makalaka rain and his threat.'²³³

Hepburn's approach to the whole issue of **Thapelo Ya Pula** was very positive and his language within the sphere of discourse of the people. Prayer was seen as expelling dry clouds and bringing clouds laden with heavy rain. Like the **dingaka**, Hepburn, now acted as if he were in touch with the unseen Divine Being.

Hepburn tells us that in this attempt to develop an indigenous form of Christianity Khama met critics even within his Ngwato Christian community. He tells that:

'Khamane was loud in his protests against this toleration as weak and vacillating and informed Mr Mackenzie and myself that Khama was making rain. Yet, in spite of this show of righteous indignation, when Khamane afterwards lost some ivory, he himself allowed a friend to throw the dice, and charm what remained with medicine, in order to discover the thief.'²³⁴

Success in the seasonal **Thapelo Ya pula** was normally followed by the thanksgiving celebrations, again in accordance with pre-Christian customs. The contribution by MacKenzie and Lloyd, in this, shows that there were missionaries who took part in the process of Christianizing Ngwato practices. In the early years of the development of the Ngwato Church, the two missionaries contributed substantially to the thanksgiving celebrations, by making a collection of Tswana hymns which fitted very well with prayers for different occasions. The style and the atmosphere in which these songs were sung was

²³² Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, pp.135-6.

²³³. Ibid, pp.135-6

²³⁴ Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.18.

typically shaped and moulded by the Ngwato religious and cultural past. By the 1890s, the occasions contained many aspects that were typically Ngwato in nature and origin. The singing at the **Thapelo Ya Pula** celebrations, for instance, was characterized and accompanied by dancing, clapping and slogans of Pula! Pula!; that is, let it rain! Let it rain! and thanking **Modimo** for the rain.²³⁵ Again, while in these services, the male participation remained the dominant factor, in hymn singing, the women who formed the silent majority in other matters, took the lead and sang joyfully.

Some of the hymns sung, as I have said, were originally composed and compiled by John MacKenzie and his LMS colleague, Lloyd. One of those by the former goes thus:

'Rain falls on all sides
With God's blessings
If you make it rain for us,
And us make it rain for us,
We too, we too
And us, make it rain for us
We too, we too.'²³⁶

Another by Lloyd goes thus:

'Give us heavy showers
Pour out raindrops,
Good rain,
That is very gentle, not like spears
A washing of the earth,
A female, heavy rain, In this time.'²³⁷

This was an outstanding contribution and indeed a great achievement by these missionaries. This was an endeavour to respond to the spiritual and material needs of the indigenous Christians, who needed a sense of material security. They thus contributed immensely in insinuating new ideas into older discourses. Hepburn, however, complained to the BaNgwato gathered for one of the thanksgiving services, that **Modimo** had given the BaNgwato abundance of rain and crops, and that some of them subsequently gave their thanksgiving according 'to the old custom'.²³⁸

In the present day Botswana, the **Thapelo Ya Pula** and its associated thanksgiving celebrations are still a very popular phenomenon. In rural areas the **Kgotla** has become the most popular meeting point,

²³⁵ See Moffat to Alexander Moffat in *Apprenticeship at Kurumane*. The Pula slogan has throughout the ages been significant. At the end of rain prayers or any other national event the slogan is sung several times - Pula! Pula! Let it rain. Let it rain eg. when the state President arrives to address a public meeting. Pula is also the name of the country's currency.

²³⁶ Mackenzie, J., (1873), *Dihela*, (Cape Town, No. 195), p.175.

²³⁷ Lloyd, E., *Dihela*, p.347, no.379.

²³⁸ Hepburn, J., (1895), op. cit, p.126.

while in towns the National Assembly (especially in the capital city) and sports stadiums have been used as venues for the occasions.

Even though, according to the tradition, rain-making came under the ultimate providence of **Modimo**, it was believed that asking influenced its production. In seeking to make rain by means of hymn singing, prayer etc the Christians drew on pre-existing forms for their activities. Just as these rituals were instrumental to the production of rain, so was prayer. This strand of activity which overlapped Ngwato cultural rituals and Christianity, was also extended to the agricultural rites. In these, we find that the ability to affect supernatural forces was not only essential to prevent disaster, but to promote fertility, growth and national prosperity as well.

ii). **Agricultural Rites**

'As sacred mistletoe was cut with formality by the Druid Priest, so when the corn is ripe in the ear, the Bechuana chief holds a public assembly, when the people proceed with axes to the field, It is forbidden during this season to carry about uncovered any of the fruits of the earth.'²³⁹

There were three major rites associated with agriculture, these being the seed cleansing, first-fruits and harvest festivals. These are described as follows:

ii)a). **The Seed Cleansing Rites**

The authority which concentrated in the ruling line was also expressed in the first fruit rituals. This rite was conducted every year, when the spring rains were imminent, or just after they had fallen. Each household took and presented selected healthy looking seeds of sorghum, water melons, maize, beans, etc which had been preserved from the last harvest for ritual cleansing. Planting and cultivating without consulting the **badimo** was taboo. Although land was passed by inheritance in perpetuity, there was no personal ownership. All the land, in which seed was sown, was vested in the community and, indeed, in the **badimo**. Therefore, no one would sow the land before the King, who had the authority of **badimo**. The King was the religious head of all such national activities. Acting on that authority therefore, after having appointed a day, he ritually cleansed selected seeds of each crop, in the presence of a large **Kgotla** gathering, himself officiating these proceedings, assisted by the most powerful **dingaka** in the land. One of my Tswana informants, in fact, told me that in performing this rite the people were publicly declaring that:

'This soil on which we are going to plant this seed, belongs to you (Modimo) and was made by you; and that as we cultivate this season let us, as a community, have a fruitful year. We trust you to protect our seeds from the birds of the air and the

²³⁹ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.385.

scorching heat of the sun.²⁴⁰

It was after, and only after, this rite had been performed by the King that the seeds could be planted. The blessings of the **badimo** were not only seen as a protective measure, but also as having the power to increase the seed productivity and the crop yield.

ii)b). First-Fruit Rites

The first-fruit rites were also very important. They were carried when the crops were ripe. The essential principle for these ceremonies was that the **badimo** deserved the first-fruits of the produce, before humans partook of them. Failure to make the offering was believed to threaten the years harvest. Similarly, the King, as the senior citizen and a living representative of the **badimo**, was the first human being to taste (**go loma ngwaga** - to bite the new year) the fruits. The King, therefore, ritually partook or tasted the fruits. To **loma** before the elders of the society did, was not only taboo, but a public insult to their authority.²⁴¹

The proceedings took place at the **Kgotla**, where the King, followed by his headmen, fed after some of the fruits had been offered to **badimo**. This tradition of the first fruits ritual, marked a significant nation-wide symbolic expression of the socio-political hierarchy, whereby the King, followed by the headmen and elders of the kingdom, bit a piece of pumpkin, spat it out, bit off another piece, chewed it and swallowed it. This was a symbol of kingly authority.²⁴² It was after this that the general public tested the first-fruits. The role of women was significant. They gathered near the **Kgotla**, singing, clapping, shouting and praising.²⁴³ This expression accumulated tremendous authority on the royal family.

ii)c). Harvest Festivals

The harvest festivals began and ended with thanksgiving to the **badimo**. Picking corn ears before a ritual inaugurating ceremony was performed, was believed to cause a bad autumn with destructive hailstorms. After the ritual, observing the beginning of the harvest season, had been carried out, a major thanksgiving ceremony was performed on the completion of the harvest, when all the crops had been brought in and winnowing had been done. This was the favourite ceremony for the old men, because in a good year this meant plenty of **bojalwa** (traditional beer).

²⁴⁰ Pilikwe, Mahalapye, Botswana, July, 1991.

²⁴¹ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.356.

²⁴² Willoughby, W.C., (1928), op. cit, p.225ff.

²⁴³ Ibid, p.206f.

Each family contributed a portion of the harvest to the King, as a gift. Although the quantity was not fixed, the population usually gave freely and cheerfully, especially in sorghum. A good proportion of the sorghum, from this contribution, was used for brewing **bojalwa**, while the surplus was kept for emergencies such as drought.

The principle of community and sharing was still the centre of these ceremonies. My Motswana informant said that the essence of the harvest rites was to tell the **badimo** that:

'We give you your harvest, and acknowledge that every one of these grains was given by you. Will you, again, in the coming season increase our labour and prosper our harvest. Let the seed, for the next ploughing season, be preserved and protected by you in good health.'²⁴⁴

Khama transformed the seed-cleansing, the first-fruit and the harvest festivals into Christian festivals, which still retained the shape of Tswana festivals and were led by the King. Hepburn tells us that:

'Khama remained firm. He held his Christian services at the digging and sowing time, and his thanksgiving for the first fruits.'²⁴⁵

The missionaries discouraged harvest thanksgiving, arguing that at these the kingly **badimo** were celebrated in the royal court by dances and songs. They also opposed the seed-cleansing ceremonies, because they said that the attention, in the minds of the people, was switched over to the 'heathen' doctoring of the seeds. Despite this, Khama still tried to Christianize these rites. He still inaugurated them, and avoided condemning the ideas about the **badimo**, while he still endeavoured to use the rites to strengthen his authority as a Christian King and also to indigenise Christianity.

Khama believed that Christianity had to be adapted to the ideas and functions promoted by these agricultural rites. Just like the harvest festivals, the Lord's Supper, for example, established a bond of unity and sharing among the people. As with the **badimo**, who were believed to be part of the day-to-day life of the people, in Christianity, the people of God are part of the Kingdom of God and can commune with Christ and with each other.

Khama, therefore, despite missionary reservations, marked his seed-time, first-fruit and harvest season with Christian festivals held at the **Kgotla** and officiated himself, as in the past.

Among the three festivals, the most popularly celebrated occasions by the Ngwato people was the harvest season. As in pre-Christian times people freely contributed gifts of crops for the harvest festivals

²⁴⁴ Pilikwe, Mahalapye, Botswana, July 1, 1991.

²⁴⁵ J. MacKenzie, (1871), op. cit, p.125.

at the **Kgotla**. They would not use their newly gathered grain for personal purposes before this ceremonial rite had been performed.

Once the gifts had been fully gathered, the King set aside a Sunday for the occasion. The portion of the harvest brought forward was not returned to the owners as in tradition, nor were these proceeds turned into **bojalwa** as before. This last thing angered the old men greatly. While they agreed that these proceeds were a gift to **Modimo**, they were accustomed to **bojalwa** being brewed and libation rituals carried out, a process which was believed to strengthen the bond between the people and the **Modimo \ badimo** relationship.²⁴⁶

Traditionally, the grain, which remained after the celebration, was stored in the custody of the King, for use during periods of crisis such as drought or for social security, that is, feeding the elderly, widows, the poor, strangers etc. In addition to these needs, Khama and his people now used these proceeds, from the contribution, to support the missionaries, the Tswana evangelists and their families, as well as to promote the general work of the Church. In 1868, for instance, a huge Church was built at Shoshong from such contributions.²⁴⁷ This reflected a pattern not unlike that of European state Churches, because English Congregationalists opposed these 'state' systems.

After the Christianization of these rituals, contributions resulting from the harvest festivals, became the basis for a self-supporting indigenous Church. During this (1871-1889) period, the principle was manifested in the form of annual gatherings of the contributions for the various ministries of the Church. As early as 1877, through such contributions, the Ngwato Church began to participate in mission work, when it gave generously in support of the establishment of the Lake Ngami mission. The LMS Directors had disassociated themselves from that mission but the Ngwato Church made it its own by economically supporting Hepburn and two Tswana evangelists, Khukwe and Diphukwe and sending them to establish work there.²⁴⁸ In this way, the traditional notion of giving the first-fruits of the harvest grain to **badimo \ Modimo** and sharing its proceeds with the needy in the society contributed to motivating people to form a self-supporting Church. The idea of sharing with others and also giving as a thanksgiving for **Modimo's** rain on the crops were the motivating factor. Addressing the BaNgwato in the 1876 harvest festival, Khama told them that the grain they had given belonged to 'Jesus Christ,

²⁴⁶. *Fortnightly Review*, 52, (1892), pp. 642-54; W.C. Willoughby, *International Review of Missions*, (1924), p.75.

²⁴⁷. MacKenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, January 27, 1868, SOAS: B35 F1 JA.

²⁴⁸. J.D. Hepburn (Shoshong) to L.M.S., December 1877, S.O.A.S: B39 F1 JA; November 16, 1877, S.O.A.S: B19 F1 JC.

that King of Kings.'²⁴⁹ Francois Coillard, a French missionary, who was in Shoshong in 1876, on his way to central Africa, also records Khama's words, when he addressed the harvest festival of that year, saying:

'My friends, this is neither Khama's corn, nor yet the missionary's. No, it is the corn of Jesus, that King of Kings, who this year has given us rain and a fruitful season.'²⁵⁰

In 1889 Lloyd, writing to the LMS Directors, also reported that:

'On the first Sunday in the New Year, we had a special service in the kgotla at 5.30am. There was a large number of people present. The meeting was opened by the chief Khamo who told the people that they were gathered together in the New Year to ask God's help and blessing throughout the year, and in all the days to come. The service was conducted by my colleague, Rev J.D. Hepburn, but the rain came on, so the meeting had to be closed quickly. Rev. J.S. Moffat was present.'²⁵¹

Khama found that the kingly ritual practices of seed cleansing, first-fruit rites and harvest festivals could be accommodated by Christianity. To him, the role of Christianity was not necessarily incompatible with the reproduction of the cultural premises upon which kingly authority was based. Like his predecessors, he exercised these functions. Sekgoma, for instance, is said to have:

'...exercised the functions belonging to all these (traditional) offices, and was held by his admirers to excel in them all.'²⁵²

Khama found that Christianity had become a major source of his kingly authority. It was this very supernatural power bestowed upon him which enabled him to organise and officiate at national events and also conduct his government.

Traditionally, a King depended on his headmen and his most powerful **dingaka** to reinforce his power. MacKenzie says of this:

'Prayers and incantations are used by the doctors when they are preparing and administering their medicine, and frequently the divining-dice are thrown,'²⁵³

Hepburn bitterly complained of some of the tendencies of these conservative old men who mixed up the old and new practices, saying:

²⁴⁹. J.D. Hepburn (Shoshong) to LMS, May 20, 1887, S.O.A.S: B40.

²⁵⁰. Coillard, F., (1897), *On the Threshold of Central Africa: A Record of Twenty Years: Pioneering Among the Barotsi of the Upper Zambezi*, p.48.

²⁵¹. Lloyd (Shoshong) to LMS, January 13, 1889, SOAS: B46 F1 JA.

²⁵². Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.371.

²⁵³ MacKenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.381.



Fig.15

Khama at the Harvest Thanksgiving (Africa Pictures (L.M.S.) - from S.O.A.S.; Also J.C. Harris, (1922), facing p.80.

'You have prayed for rain, and now your fields are full to overflowing, and your old men are about to take the first fruits, and give them to the old ceremony; and this is how you thank God.'²⁵⁴

Khama, who was visualised by the BaNgwato as a representative of **Modimo**, also used European missionaries and the most powerful headmen to reinforce the sacred status bestowed upon him. This is why Khama found his relationship with missionaries important and was the reason why, when he instituted the national day of prayer in 1875, he consulted Hepburn and MacKenzie.²⁵⁵

While most of the missionaries preferred to use the Bible, prayer and songs as their tools, at times the conservatives challenged them to combine that with incantations and throwing of bones. For example MacKenzie tells us of how he was confronted by a Ngwato woman on this issue:

'Why don't you throw the dice, Monare (Sir)?' said the wife of a man whom I was attending, and who had been given up by the native doctors; 'your medicines are no doubt good, but you ought also to throw the divining dice.'²⁵⁶

The belief in divining by throwing dice was exemplified in remarkable ways by the Ngwato doctors in cases of severe illness.²⁵⁷ MacKenzie wrote of this saying:

'When a case has baffled all medical skill the Bamangwato doctors produce their divining-dice. Certain herbs are represented by certain positions of the dice; and the medicine which is thus prescribed for their patient is unhesitatingly administered by the doctors, whatever the result should be. They had before exercised their own highest judgement; they now follow the supposed unseen guidance which they invoke.'²⁵⁸

It was this unseen guidance that the people wanted the missionaries to relate to. Although MacKenzie demonstrated his willingness to respond to the Ngwato religious world view, he found that his training still compelled him to separate his medical practice from his religious activity. Although the BaNgwato may not have put it in the same terminology as we do today, it is evident that they believed that Christianity had to penetrate their culture and produce answers to the problems of their everyday life. Another example of this process is in connection with **bogwera** and **bojale** institutions.

3.8. Bogwera and Bojale Institutions

Of the **bogwera** rite John MacKenzie wrote in 1871 saying:

'The rite of circumcision is administered throughout Bechuanaland boys between

²⁵⁴ Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op. cit, p.126.

²⁵⁵ W.D. MacKenzie, (1902), *John MacKenzie: South African Missionary and Statesman*, pp.386 7.

²⁵⁶ Mackenzie, J., (1871), op. cit, p.381.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p.382.

perhaps eight and fourteen years of age. It is not performed every year, but whensoever there is a sufficient number of youths waiting for its observance. No single ceremony has a wider significance; it may be said to introduce the youth to heathen manhood, with all its duties and responsibilities. No honourable marriage could take place with a man who had not gone through the "bogwera" or initial ceremony. It is also the season when the youths are instructed in the wisdom of the ancestors of the tribe. But above all, it is the introduction of the youths into social life, under a regimental name which they will receive during the progress of the ceremony, and which will be their collective designation as long as they live.²⁵⁹

The significance of this institution lies primarily in its function as a 'rite of passage', marking and affecting the transition from adolescence to adulthood. It was also an important educational institution. It was here that the wisdom of the ancestors was passed to the young, instructing them in the traditions of the society. But, above all, it was the introduction of the youths into social life, under a new given regimental name, which they received during the progress of the ceremony and which became their collective designation as long as they lived.²⁶⁰ This name determined their status and seniority as a regiment and as guardians of the nation.²⁶¹

In 1840 and 1857, Livingstone observed that **bogwera** and **bojale** were educational institutions, by which young people were trained and equipped for life. He wrote that:

'The bogwera is a civil rather than a religious rite. All the boys of an age between ten and fourteen or fifteen are selected to be companions for life, of one of the sons of the chief. They are taken out to some retired spot in the forest, and huts are erected for their accommodation; the old men go out and teach them to dance, initiating them, at the same time, into all the mysteries of African politics and government.'²⁶²

Again, in 1878, Parker Gilmore, a traveller and hunter, also agreed that this institution was a school that had the ability 'to bind them (initiates) firmly together for good or bad',²⁶³ a function which was further confirmed by both Willoughby in 1902 and J.T. Brown in 1921.²⁶⁴ Edwin Lloyd, however, complained saying that:

²⁵⁹ Ibid, pp.375-6.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, pp.375-6

²⁶¹ Brown, T.J., (1926), *Among the Bantu Nomads*,..., p.73; Holub, E., *Seven Years in South Africa*..., 1872-79, vol.1, p.398.

²⁶² D. Livingstone, (1857), op. cit, p.129.

²⁶³ Gilmore, P., (1878), *The Great Thirstland: A Ride Through Natal, Orange Free State, and Kalahari Desert*, p.300.

²⁶⁴ *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*: Brown, J.T., 'The Circumcision of the Bechuana Tribes', vol. 51, (1921), pp.419-27; W.C. Willoughby, 'Notes On the Initiation ceremonies of the Becwana', vol.39, (1903), pp.228-45.

'The character of the people discourages... especially the unrivalled niggardliness ... We live in a heathen atmosphere, which is often unspeakably depressing. Around us, a living immovable mass, however silent and invisible it may be, is always, night and day, year in and year out, in daily and implacable opposition to our work for the Lord Jesus Christ.'²⁶⁵

Some of the LMS missionaries, like Lloyd consequently forcefully condemned initiation ceremonies, for a number of reasons. The **bogwera** and **bojale** ritual ceremonies and their sacred dances and songs were ritually inaugurated by the **dingaka**, a factor which the early missionaries opposed. Another factor for the missionaries was that the practice was seen as part of the training which was believed to impart notions about ancestors.

The missionaries' criticism of the customary initiation ceremonies not only denied some young people the rituals through which men were traditionally assigned a position in the socio-political hierarchy, but also hindered their participation in matters which were a symbol of identity within the society. Abandoning these practices, which were central to relationship to the **badimo** was believed to cause some form of wrath or punishment. When Sekgoma's sons refused to participate in **bogwera**, or to take a second wife, a serious conflict arose, where it had extreme political and religious repercussions. Even though the missionaries did not generally make a distinction between the political and religious elements of the institution, it was the religious aspect of the rite, more than anything, which they fundamentally opposed. They said, in fact, that people had to choose between two ways and two rites:

'... the way of God's word and the way of heathenism; the baptismal rite and the circumcision rite. Let all give up the one and adopt the other.'²⁶⁶

The missionaries subsequently used this as one of the yardsticks for distinguishing Christians from pagans. Throughout the years, it became a token of a young man's sincerity and his parent's Christian principles that they should refrain from this 'heathen' ceremony. Khama, however, seeing that it was not essential for Christianity to destroy Ngwato culture, tried to transform the **bogwera** school system. This was one of the hardest tasks he ever faced, because the transformation of the **bogwera** ritual remained controversial: the people found that the missionary schools were an inadequate substitute. Khama, while he wanted to preserve the educational and the **mephato** (age regimental) system of the institution, categorically told his people that circumcision had to be abandoned. Following this announcement a tension arose between Khama and the conservative Ngwato old men, who said to him:

'But you will let us circumcise as always.' But Khama replied: 'You may do as you like with your own sons, but you shall compel no one.' He made it known that no one was to be compelled to go to the ceremony, nor should they suffer from doing so; their manhood should be secured by himself (sic). The old men set themselves to work to get up a specially great ceremony. The girls were induced to declare that they

²⁶⁵. Edwin Lloyd (Kanye) to LMS, February 14, 1894, S.O.A.S: B51 F1 JA.

²⁶⁶. J. MacKenzie, (1871), op. cit, p.378.

would marry none but men who had been through the ceremony, to which consequently a great many went.²⁶⁷

Although that was the last ceremony of circumcision held among the BaNgwato, the formation of **mephato** (regiments) continued to be an important aspect of the Ngwato society. The naming ceremony became a one day thing, instituted for the creation of **mephato**.²⁶⁸ These measures, adopted by Khama, were acceptable in Christian terms, and also maintained the Ngwato cultural heritage. The **bogwera** and **mephato** systems remained an immense source of the king's authority, as in the past. The abandoning of the circumcision ritual aspect did not in any way affect Khama's influence. In the past, **bogwera** was an essential sacred act, which created a lifelong bond of loyalty between the young men and the world of the **badimo**, of which the King was the living representative. As already pointed out above, it was also a social act, whereby the young were introduced into adult life, responsibility and mutual trust, and also bonded to their own society. This regimental process safeguarded and ensured political, religious and economic harmony, security and prosperity, and also sources of kingly authority.

Although Khama abandoned the circumcision, its functions continued to be psychologically fulfilled. Once the young men had been taught in the traditions of their forefathers, the graduands were given their mephato name and initiated into adulthood, as well as their new socio-political responsibility, by a huge Church service, with prayer, preaching and singing.

As in other rituals Khama was assisted by his European missionary, Church deacons and elders in performing these Christian activities. They now appealed to **Modimo** to fortify this young army. Henceforth it became a tradition that military campaigns were preceded by a Christian meeting, with prayer, singing and preaching, where previously incantations and the throwing of bones had played an essential role. In 1882, for instance, when Khama led a few **mephato** to protect Ngwato cattle-posts against the Ndebele warriors who were on their way to attack the BaTawana of Ngamiland, a huge Church service was conducted and was followed by a series of specific prayers for the army.²⁶⁹ The same procedure was also repeated in 1887, when headman Mokhutshwane, Khama's own trusted brother, led a campaign against the BaSeleka of Tswapong hills.²⁷⁰ Prayer, invoked divine protection over the warriors as the own old rituals had been believed to do.

²⁶⁷. J.D. Hepburn, (1895), op cit, p.125.

²⁶⁸. Ibid, pp.125-8.

²⁶⁹. Hepburn (Shoshong) to LMS, January 10, 1882 & January 12, 1885, SOAS: B41 F3 JA & B43 F1 JA. Khama had left Kgamane, his Christian brother, assisted by Gogakgosi, a senior Church elder in charge of the town, but the former against the resistance from Christian chiefs and headmen revived the traditional practices of rain-making, circumcision and beer-drinking etc.

²⁷⁰. J.D. Hepburn, (Shoshong) to LMS, May 20, 1887, S.O.A.S: B44 F2 JC.

Khama thus used both foreign and local religious expertise, and the Ngwato people conceptualised both in the light of past ideas and forms.

While Khama appreciated the value of Western education he hoped to see it rooted in the cultural and religious experience of his people. In 1885 Khama, in consultation with his European missionary, Hepburn, tried to relate the missionary schools to the traditional modes of life. This was based on the obvious fact that the Ngwato youth were needed in all of Ngwato life such as at the cattle - posts, at the fields, military duties and hunting.²⁷¹

While the missionary demanded the full attendance of boys in their school, Khama devised a practical scheme, whereby the boys could, for example, attend classes and be taught and trained in reading, writing and teaching in winter, and then released to be at the cattle - posts in summer. Good students were encouraged to organise learning classes at the cattle-posts, in which they taught others to read and write. According to Lloyd, this experimental scheme was very successful, in that it led to an increase of literacy in the cattle-posts.²⁷² However, six years later, the same Lloyd, complained that the Tswana way of life disrupted missionary activities, because when most of the boys were at the cattle-posts, both the school and the church were poorly attended. In a paper presented before the *Founders' Week Convention* in 1895, Lloyd said that:

'From a missionary point of view, the possession of large herds of cattle is difficult, and we should be glad to see the Bechuana sell their cattle and put the proceeds into the Government Saving Bank.'²⁷³

What the BaNgwato needed was not a complete abandonment of their way of life, but ways of adapting it to new challenges.²⁷⁴

Khama and those missionaries who willingly tried to adapt education to the needs of the people were

²⁷¹ Brown, T.J., (1926), op. cit, p.73.

²⁷² E. Lloyd, (Shoshong) to LMS, January 13, 1889, SOAS: B34 F2 JA.

²⁷³ 'Founders' Week Convention Report', 1895, p.168.

²⁷⁴ The recommendations of the 1938 Tambaram Council Report on the relationship between missions and education are of great interest: 'We recommend the extension in each mission field of the use of curriculum materials which are rooted in the racial, cultural and religious experience of the people involved.' (E.W. Smith, (1944), *Mass Education in African Society*, Colonial No.186, pp.31-2). This crucial point which Dr Westermann (*The International Review of Missions*, pp.418-37 in E.W. Smith, 1944) calls, 'The Value of African Past,' is also explored further by E.W. Smith, who has pointed out that: 'The greatest of missionaries, St Paul, varied the form of his preaching to suit his hearers, becoming all things to all men to save some by all and every means. To the Jews he became as a Jew, appealing to their knowledge of the Scriptures; but when he preached to pagan Lycaonians and Greeks, he appealed to their natural religious sentiments, to the witness of nature and, on occasion, to the truth told by their own poets.' (Smith, E.W., (1944), op. cit, p.37).

therefore won, because to fail to accept that education has to adapt itself to the cultural expression, ideas and thought patterns of the people was tantamount to denying essential aspects of the culture, which would have otherwise laid a firm foundation for the indigenous educational system. Good results might have been achieved if practical ways of integrating the whole Ngwato educational methods transmitting knowledge with the missionary system were adopted. However, most of the LMS missionaries insisted on a western type of education, expecting the Ngwato scholars, for instance, to have a thorough knowledge of the geography of Palestine and the like.²⁷⁵

Traditional education, however, dealt with matters of the community, which brought the child into contact with day - to - day needs and activities. It also transmitted a whole complex of the people's cultural heritage and past. The **bogwera** candidates were, for instance, instructed in social matters of adulthood, national security and responsibility; and also in cultural matters, which included their own history, laws, customs and languages, as well as in practical activities, dealing with production, tool-making (especially spears, axes and shields) and handicrafts. In fact, the whole environment stimulated the young to learn. In other words, the whole physical and geographical aspect, that is, the rivers, mountains, pasturage, hunting grounds, etc, if wisely investigated, could have provided ways of strengthening the Ngwato knowledge of **Modimo**.

The BaNgwato also communicated ideas, knowledge, historical events and moral standards, through stories and drama, of which story-telling (**maile le dinane**) was the most popular. Traditionally, the most senior member of the family passed information to the young, round the evening fire, by story-telling.

The story-loving BaTswana evangelists would have benefited from this approach, if the missionaries had incorporated into their training methods these Tswana folk-tales, poems, songs, legends and proverbial skills. Although the missionaries failed to do so, they did recognise that in such a predominantly non-literate population, story-telling and memorization skills played an essential role. Edwin Lloyd, for instance, could report in 1887 that one of his best students was a Tswana man, who had effectively and successfully: '... committed many passages of Scripture to memory'.²⁷⁶ As a result the Gospel message spread far and wide, because of the cultural form it took.²⁷⁷ These indigenous Christians shared the scriptures with their own people, in their own language and culture,

²⁷⁵. E. Lloyd (Shoshong) to LMS, November 20, 1885, SOAS: B34 F2 JA.

²⁷⁶. E. Lloyd (Shoshong) to LMS, February 11, 1887, SOAS: B44 F5 JC. Also see Hepburn, JD., (1895), op. cit, p.328.

²⁷⁷. J.D. Hepburn, (1895), op cit, p.328.

around their evening fires in story form, which was the most popular means of passing information.

Despite all these advantages which lay in the hands of the missionaries, of working through indigenous evangelists using their own cultural methods, even as late as 1869, two of the oldest members of the LMS Bechuana District Committee (B.D.C) still insisted that: '... they knew no one suitable for such instruction [theological] or whom they would propose as candidates.' for the ministry.²⁷⁸

The scheme for the training of Tswana evangelists had earlier been proposed by Livingstone, who argued that the people needed not only to hear the Scriptures in their own tongue, but also through their own teachers. He wrote:

'At the next meeting of committee (1845), I presented a paper on the subject to the brethren. In it I expressed my convictions on the subject of systematic training of agents, and ventured to suggest that an institution for the purpose be organised at and be requested to act as Tutor of the same.'²⁷⁹

However, Robert Moffat and others refused to accept the scheme, arguing that the native Christians were not ready for training. In the aftermath of this resolution, Livingstone wrote to the LMS:

'I am more and more convinced that in order to (effect) the permanent settlement of the Gospel in any part, the natives must be taught to relinquish their reliance on Europe.'²⁸⁰

In the light of Livingstone's example it would be wrong to cite all the nineteenth century Tswana missions and missionaries as examples of failure. They were not all bigoted, imperialistic, naive, arrogant and hypocritical, as we are sometimes made to understand, though some of them obviously could be described in that way. It is also true that even the most intolerant and narrow-minded missionaries varied in their attitude and behaviour over the years. Many of the LMS missionaries, for instance, contributed a great deal in the creation of Setswana grammar and literature. They recognised that to the spread of Christianity language was central. The effort to translate and print Scripture and literature into the Setswana language dates back as early as 1830 at Kudumane.²⁸¹ In this aspect, the missionaries significantly helped in adjusting Christianity to the prevailing cultural expectations. In their translation of the Scripture, for instance, they adapted the notion of **Modimo**, which filled the Ngwato understanding of Christianity with a cultural content which helped them to accept Christianity as their own.

²⁷⁸ J. Mackenzie (Kudumane) to LMS, December 21, 1881, SOAS: B41 F1 JD.

²⁷⁹ Schapera, I., ed). (1961), *Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence*, p. 100: Livingstone to LMS, 17 March, 1847.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p.108: Livingstone to LMS, 17 March, 1847.

²⁸¹ J. MacKenzie (Shoshong) to LMS, October 7, 1880, SOAS: B40 F4 JA.

By 1857, the translation of the Old Testament,²⁸² by Moffat and Ashton, put into the hands of the Tswana, in their own language, the whole Bible.²⁸³ The New Testament and the Psalms had already been translated and printed by Moffat and his colleagues in 1840.²⁸⁴ Other publications included the Setswana vocabulary and spelling-books, Scripture extracts and lessons and catechisms.²⁸⁵ Also Setswana tracts, periodicals and newspapers.²⁸⁶ In the same period, a voluminous material of Setswana Hymnary and Infant School hymns were also translated.²⁸⁷

The development of this religious literature was partly facilitated by the willingness of LMS missionaries to learn the language. This is exemplified by Livingstone, who soon after his arrival, endeavoured to acquire an accurate knowledge of the Setswana language, saying:

‘I am busy learning the language, which is not remarkably difficult. The only impediment is a want of proper aids such as Dictionary, Grammars, etc. I hope however soon to conquer it, and then preach Christ and him crucified to the perishing Bechuana’s.’²⁸⁸

By 1852 he had also composed a vocabulary entitled, *An Analysis of the Language of the Bechuana’s*.²⁸⁹

²⁸² . Moffat, J.S., (1886), *The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat*, p.304.

²⁸³ Moffat to James & Mary Smith, 1 April 1826.

²⁸⁴ Moffat, J.S., (1886), op. cit, pp.215, 220.

²⁸⁵ . *L.M.S. Report*, xxix, (1823), p.103. such as Ashton’s *Buka ea Likaelelo tsa Emitla* (Cape Town, 1832, 24pp); Scripture extracts such as Moffat’s and John Campbell’s *Rara Wa Rona* (Our Father, 1826 and 1815 respectively); Moffat to LMS, Kudumane, 5Aug 1822. Setswana version of the St Luke’s Gospel (1830); Catechisms such as translation of *Dr Brown’s Catechism* (*Buka ea Pocho ea Tuto le Poluko tsa Yesu Krete*) (Grey Collection, Capetown, 36pp)

²⁸⁶ Ashton to LMS, Kudumane, 7 & 15Oct 1850: SOAS: In-letters, SVA, B25 F1 JD; 13July 1858 B31 F1 JA; Also JS Moffat, op cit, p.256. Ashton’s *Mokaedi oa Bechuana, le Muleri oa Mahuku* (the instructor of the Bechuana and Anouncer of News), *Loeto Lwa Modumedi* (Bunyan’s Pilgrims Progress) and *Line Upon Line*.

²⁸⁷ . Northcott, C., (1961), *Robert Moffat: Pioneer in Africa*, pp.341-3. *Lihela tse di Bokang Yehova* (32pp) by Livingstone see *David Livingstone’s Family Letters, 1841-48*, vol.1, pp.71, 271. The first Setswana hymn-book (1831) by Moffat and Edwards was consequently enlarged and produced at Kudumane in 1870 (216pp)

²⁸⁸ . I. Schapera,(ed) (1959), vol.1, op. cit, p.38, also D. Livingstone, (1857), p.8 and Chamberlain, D,(ed) (1940), *Some Letters from Livingstone*, 194-5.

²⁸⁹ . A version of this work was, in 1858, published by Richard Thompson, Geologist on the Zambezi Expedition, Copies of which can be found at the *David Livingstone Centre*, Blantyre, Scotland.

By 1885 A.J. Wookey had produced and published a Setswana commentary, on the Gospel of Matthew.²⁹⁰ These were some of the outstanding accomplishments by the LMS missionaries. In fact from the 1880s, the B.D.C attached great importance to the learning of the language, so that all the new missionaries, joining the Tswana mission, were expected to take proficiency language texts in it before being permanently deployed. In 1886, reporting the accomplishment of the requirement by Lloyd, Price told the Directors that:

‘We have great pleasure in expressing our entire satisfaction with the progress made by the Rev. Edwin Lloyd in the acquirement of the Secwana (sic) language. He was thoroughly tested in reading and in translation from secwana into English, and vice versa, and he showed a very creditable acquaintance both with the vocabulary and grammar of the language. We had, also an opportunity of having Mr Lloyd preach in Secwana and were pleased to find that he had already acquired such a command of the language as to be able to speak with considerable amount of freedom and ease.’²⁹¹

The Ngwato cultural heritage played an important role in developing an indigenous type of Christianity. Music was another potential area which would have facilitated that development. Ngwato music, which penetrated everyday experiences, added its spontaneity and joyful features to the Church life. Although some of the missionaries refused to welcome this, there were signs of its unrecognised intrusion into the Church hymns. This gradual change, in harmony and tempo, of Church hymns, to suit the local ones, was recognised by Captains Richard and Robert Glyn, who passed through Shoshong on their way to Victoria Falls, saying:

‘On Sunday we went to the Kafir Church where there was a good attendance, the singing seemed to delight them much,...’²⁹²

In their festivals, such as **Thapelo Ya Pula** and weddings, singing, clapping and dancing was part of Church life.

3.9. Other Socio-political Transformations

Khama’s interpretation of Christianity also affected issues of human rights, justice and dignity. When Livingstone visited Shoshong in 1843, he described how the BaSarwa and BaKgalagadi, for instance, had lived in a state of serfdom.²⁹³ In 1882 however F.C. Selous, a famous British hunter visiting

²⁹⁰ A.J. Wookey to LMS, Molepolole, 7Sept 1885, SOAS: In-letters, S\A, B43 F2 JA.

²⁹¹ R. Price (Shoshong) to LMS, April 15, 1886, SOAS: B44 F1 JC.

²⁹² Long, U, (ed), (1956), op. cit, p.143, note 7.

²⁹³ I. Schapera, Ed (1950), *Livingstone’s Missionary Correspondence*, pp.161-1; *National Library of Scotland*, Livingstone to MaChehose, June 2, 1843, Manuscript No. 656. Also see Hengry Lichtenstein, (1806), vol.2, op. cit, p.397; James Chapman, (1868), op. cit, pp.51-2.

Shoshong found that Khama had removed some of these oppressive measures and introduced laws which gave more rights to the above mentioned people.²⁹⁴ In response to this, the Ngwato middle class, with their strong political and social views on the serfdom system, were very critical of these changes, because the new ideas disrupted their sources of cheap labour, which accounted for their economic wealth.

Khama also wanted to protect his people from certain dehumanizing practices carried out by some European traders. Of these practices, liquor trade and drinking was the most hated by Khama, because it morally and physically degraded and economically exploited his people. The traders, who were not concerned for the people's lives, were making huge profits.²⁹⁵ In addition to liquor being a means through which his people were exploited, it was an economic liability, in that it encouraged laziness and thus led to a decline in agricultural productivity. Khama also found that it encouraged people to violate his political and religious laws, which resulted in the subversion of his authority. In early 1876, for instance, Khama addressed a group of dissident white traders at Palapye, saying:

'You think you can despise my laws because I am a black man. Well, I am black, but I am Chief of my country. When you white men rule the country, then you may do what you like; at present I rule, and I shall maintain the laws you insult and despise I am trying to lead ... according to the Word of God, which we received from you white people and you have shown us an example of wickedness. You know that some of my brothers have learned to like drink, and you tempt them with it, I make an end of it today. Go! take your cattle, leave my town and never come back.'²⁹⁶

Believing that they were superior to Ngwato law and kinship authority, as stated above, they refused to observe Khama's law against liquor trade and drinking in his town.

Khama's views which developed from seeing these traders economically raping his people after they were under the influence of alcohol, cannot be expressed in any stronger words than those quoted in the *Times* in 1893:

'Lobengula never gives me sleepless nights, but to fight against drink is to fight against demons, and not against men. I dread the white men's drink more than the assegais of the Matebele, which kill men's bodies and is over quick; but drink puts devils into men and destroys both their souls and their bodies forever. Its wounds never heal. I pray your Honour, never ask me to open even a door to drink.'²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴. F.C. Selous, (1893), *Travels and Adventure in South-East Africa*, pp.112-3.

²⁹⁵. J. Harris, (1922), op. cit, p.52.

²⁹⁶. *Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, London, September, 1880, pp.1215-9; J.D. Hepburn, (1895), op. cit, pp.147-8; *The Scottish Temperance*, December, 1880, p.286.

²⁹⁷. *The Times*, 'Khama', September, 1893, p.8.

At one point Khama literally pulled his drunk father out of a trade negotiation with a white trader, seeing that Sekgoma was being economically looted. This fight against liquor did not only gain him international recognition, but also became a political weapon, which he later used against the intentions of such unscrupulous Europeans as Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (B.S.A.C).²⁹⁸

In the 1880s and 1890s British papers and journals were writing in support of Khama's political, economic²⁹⁹ and social views. In 1880, for instance, *The League Journal*, in support of Khama's efforts, wrote calling him a 'Christian brother and co-worker in this great cause of God and humanity' and condemning 'Christian Britain' for simultaneously sending to Africa 'the Gospel of Jesus Christ - the water of life' along with the 'water of death'.³⁰⁰ The LMS missionaries themselves at times disagreed with Khama's strict views on that subject. In the 1880s, in fact, his policies on liquor had very few supporters, even amongst the Ngwato Church leaders, only half the Church favoured abstinence. But Khama, arguing that 'beer is the source of all quarrels and disputes',³⁰¹ gradually won friends in the course of history. Later in 1896, Willoughby, who was one of the most liberal missionaries, became Khama's supporter in this matter, and for instance wrote: '[You] cannot be a slave to beer and a slave to Jesus at the same time.'³⁰²

In May 1885 Khama, with John MacKenzie playing a leading role, made major political structural adjustments and accepted British protection, for fear of Boer encroachment on his country. In accepting the protectorate status, Khama told Warren and his delegation, that he was capable of administering the internal affairs of his country, and that he wanted the traditional laws to remain.³⁰³ In this regard MacKenzie tells us that Khama spoke saying:

'... I have heard, and I accept of (receive) the friendship and protection of Government of England within Bamangwato country. ... Nevertheless, I am not battled in the government of my own town, or in deciding cases among my own people according to custom; ... I have to say that there are certain laws of my country which the Queen ... finds in operation and which are advantageous for my people, and I wish that these laws should be established and not taken away ... the lands of the

²⁹⁸. See chapter 4 for details.

²⁹⁹. See chapter 4.

³⁰⁰. *League Journal*, 'Address of the Directors of the Scottish temperance league to Khama', October 9, 1880, p.325.

³⁰¹. *Fortnightly Review*, 52, 1892, June 1, pp.642 - 54.

³⁰². W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, March 16, 1896, S.O.A.S: B53 F1 JC.

³⁰³. J. MacKenzie, (1884), op. cit, Vol. 1, p.79, 264.

Bamangwato are not saleable ...³⁰⁴

However, Khama agreed with MacKenzie's view that, presented with a growing political crisis, British protection was the most practical answer. In this transition period, Khama found the LMS missionaries a very useful political instrument. He saw his relationship with these English missionaries as the key to achieving an alliance with the British Government, which to him was important for the protection of his land and people. The LMS and its agents, however, saw the British colonial activities in Southern Africa as a divine appointment, which would facilitate the spread of Christianity. Their attitude to the creation of the Protectorate was seen in terms of religious imperial expansion, while its agents distanced themselves from the traditional structures and aligned with the colonial authorities, partly because they were afraid of African nationalistic tendencies and possibilities of a religion contrary to Christianity emerging. The appointment of MacKenzie, to the office of Assistant Commissioner of Bechuanaland followed. Seeing Bechuanaland as their field of operation, the LMS hoped that the political power of their own home Government, while protecting the BaTswana from rival European powers, would give them, as British missionaries, freedom of operation. Although this was met with mixed feelings from other quarters. The Chronicle of the LMS, seeing a close connection between British political expansion and the progress of its missionary's Christian activities, wrote:

'[The Directors] yield to what seem(ed) to be a providential indication of the will of God in the services of MacKenzie and allowed him to join the new administration.'³⁰⁵

They hoped that MacKenzie would influence Government officials to support LMS work:

'That through the development of a just and humane policy on the part of British Government ... there may be inaugurated a future for the Bechuana people, by which the first beginnings of civilization and the early lessons of the Gospel may be carried out in abundant prosperity'³⁰⁶

Supporters of Robert Moffat's apolitical views, in the B.D.C, however genuinely opposed MacKenzie's appointment to that political office. Ashton's letter to the LMS was typical of their view:

'I think both the missionary position and influence of both Mr MacKenzie and all of the rest of us would suffer by his accepting office.'³⁰⁷

The BaTswana themselves, at times, did not make any distinction between the motives of the LMS missionaries and that of the British political power. A.J. Wookey, a missionary in the 1870s, among the Tswana, informed the Directors about the Tswana's resentment of missionaries, saying:

'I have been told again and again that we are deceivers and only

³⁰⁴ J. MacKenzie, (1884) op. cit, p.262.

³⁰⁵ *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, March 10, 1884, pp.119-20.

³⁰⁶ W.D. MacKenzie, (1902), op. cit, p.306.

³⁰⁷ W. Ashton (Kudumane) to LMS, September 1, 1879, S.O.A.S: B 41. Also see MacKenzie to LMS, September 25, 1879, September 10, 1885, S.O.A.S: B 41.

trying as agents of the government to get the country.³⁰⁸

Later still, Anthony Sillery, a British colonial official writing in 1954 criticises Khama for having adopted:

‘... wholesale missionary-inspired reforms, deliberately (and perhaps unwisely) abolished many of the old ceremonies in which his predecessors had played a leading part, without waiting for them to unnaturally wither away.’³⁰⁹

However, his assumption, that Khama’s political ritual functions and powers disappeared with his acceptance of Christianity, has no evidence. Khama insisted on the continuity of his traditional laws, customs and government. He simply transformed them in the light of Christianity. In 1876, for instance, John MacKenzie wrote:

‘Kgama recently proclaimed that the presence of the European had not altered the [Ngwato] law as to land and houses: that the ground was inalienable; that no house could be bought or sold; but might be used by its occupant in the transaction of business, or as a residence, so long as he observed the laws of the country.’³¹⁰

Although he was glad to have Europeans visiting his country, Khama stated that it was his duty as King to take care of his country, for his people. Mrs Knight - Bruce, wife of the Bishop of Shonaland, in 1893 told the *Times* that:

‘He [Khama] is a radical reformer who yet develops both himself and his people on the natural lines; he has made himself into a character that can be spoken of as a ‘perfect English gentleman’, but without losing for a moment his self-respect as an African; he has kept his position as a disciple, not a mimic, of white civilization and he has shown how such a man can raise a nation. He has done it all, as he would tell us, because he is a Christian.’³¹¹

3.10. Summary

In summary, therefore, it must be mentioned that the major factors of this chapter constitute an important development. Firstly, the fact that, whenever an effort was made to contextualize, a rapid growth of Christianity followed. The implications for this development went far beyond anything the missionaries foresaw, as to what was going to be the affect of their presence among the BaNgwato. One would naturally have expected them to take this new development seriously, because of its widespread implications for rapid growth in evangelization of the Ngwato territory and its surrounding regions, but they did not.

³⁰⁸ A.J. Wookey to L.M.S., September 3, 1878, S.O.A.S: B40.

³⁰⁹ Sillery, A, (1954), *Sechele*, p.44.

³¹⁰ J. Mackenzie (Shoshong) to L.M.S., August 18, 1876, S.O.A.S: B 38 F 1 JC.

³¹¹ *The Times*, ‘Khama’, September 21, 1893, p.3.

The second crucial observation is one of the most important factors of this study. Although the development of the Ngwato Church was at its infant stages, it expressed the well - known 'three - self - formula' of Venn and Anderson, which looked towards the formation of a self-propagating and self-supporting church.

The third factor is that, politically, Khama demonstrated a great diplomatic expertise. He successfully used the missionaries and Christianity as a weapon to control more aggressive forms of European imperialism. Although the British Protectorate guaranteed protection against their neighbours, especially the Boers, it also denied the BaNgwato and the Batswana in general, autonomy. The role and influence of the missionaries, especially MacKenzie, as political advisers to the kings in external affairs was evident.

Fourthly and lastly, it must be mentioned that in their participation in customary ritual practices, like rain-making, preparing the army for warfare, and political matters, the missionaries tended to emphasize cultural discontinuities. They, mostly failed to fit into the Tswana cultural scheme. Khama sought to find structural similarities and thus created continuities in many areas.

Under the forces of European political powers, civilization, Christianity and politics, were all seen as equally important. Khama sought to collaborate sometimes and at other times to apply resistance. It was in collaboration with the coming forces, for instance, that he found peace and totally consolidated his people, as will be seen in the following chapter.



Fig.16
Outspanning at the deserted church in Shoshong.
(LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS)

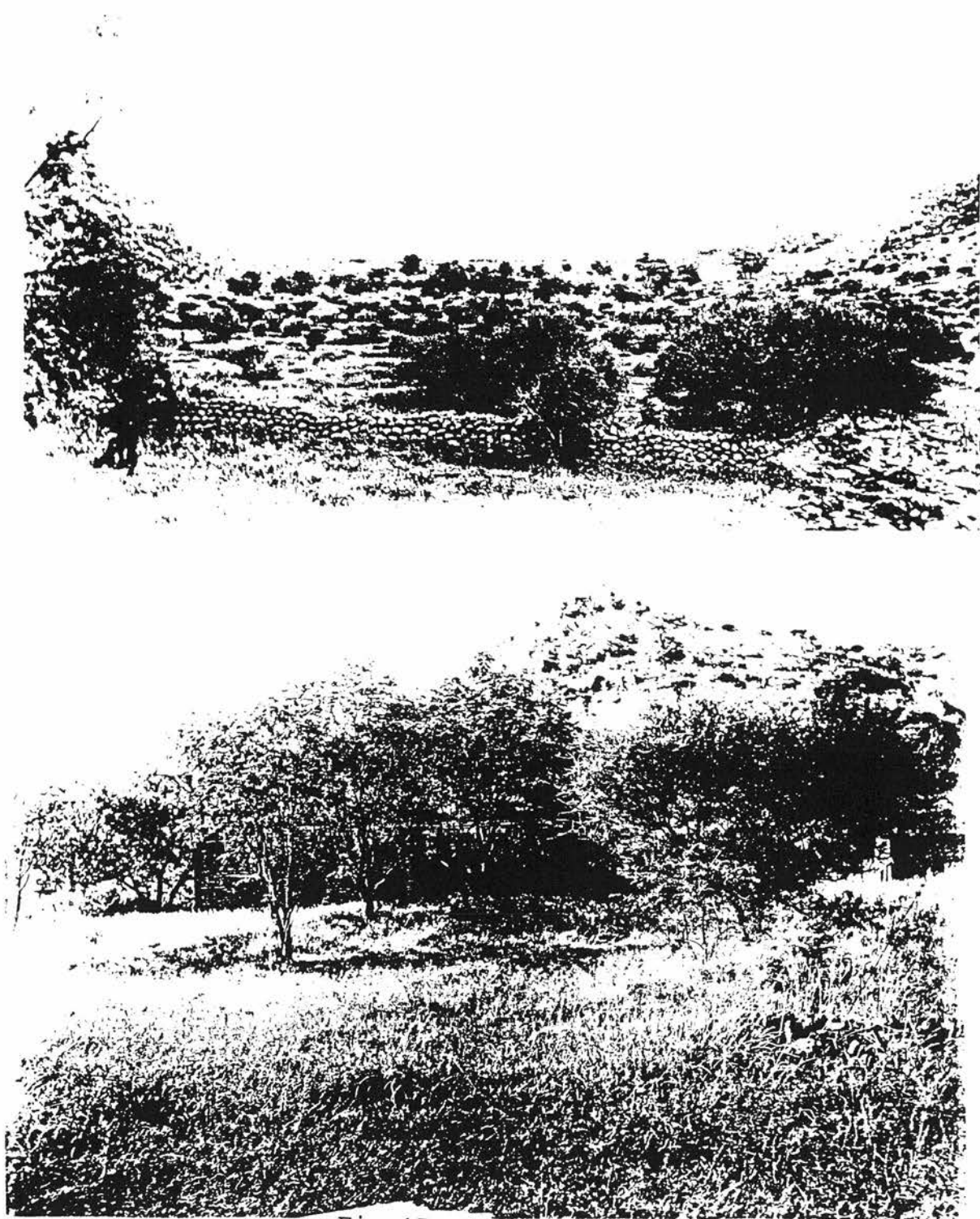


Fig.17

Site of Shoshong town (top) viewed from the ruins of the Mission House (bottom). Africa Pictures (L.M.S.) - from S.O.A.S.)

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. The Palapye Church, 1889-1902

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the development of conflicts which arose from the interactions between the LMS missionaries and the Ngwato in the years 1889 to 1902. Khama wanted the **bogosi** (chiefly power) to survive the impact of the European cultural imposition and consequently strove to preserve it by controlling the Ngwato Church to this effect. James Hepburn, the resident missionary of the time, vigorously opposed this move. W.C. Willoughby, Hepburn's replacement, had devoted much of his time and energy to developing education, reorganizing the Church and assisting Khama in political matters. However, his notions of European civilization and superiority, and failure to filter his ideas through the Ngwato culture created difficulties.

This chapter also shows that the period (1889-1902) was one of the most challenging for Khama. He had to face Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company's (B.S.A.C.) threats to incorporate his country into its territory and fight against the devastating effects caused by rinderpest and droughts, which had consequently compelled him to move his town to a new location. In addition to this, there was also a continuous family power struggle, which had been partly inspired by Hepburn's dissatisfaction with Khama's rule.

The other source of conflicts was land ownership. While land ownership was seen by the BaNgwato as a means of integrating the church firmly into society and the kingly power, the missionaries opposed the idea of establishing church buildings on land owned by the community. This same argument, that land was alienable from the Ngwato traditional system also affected school buildings and water wells.

This period will show the position occupied by the Ngwato church within that colonial set up and the extent to which it succeeded in combining political and religious factors. It will also identify some of the major factors which influenced the mission's stand vis - a - vis the colonial state.

4.2. Settlement at the New Capital of Palapye

In their removal from Shoshong to Palapye, the BaNgwato demonstrated that there was a strong link between the state and the Church. Although the task of transporting the actual Church building and mission house materials like the state owned property over the 128 kilometres, was expensive and time



Fig.18

Top: Place of the **Kgotla** assembly in Palapye.
(LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS)

Bottom: Khama holding court in the **Kgotla** in about 1890.
(J.M. Chirenje, (1977) pp. 22 & 23;
Also in Isaac Schapera, (1970) p. 5.)





Fig.19

Khama's home at Palapye (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS).

consuming, they were done by the state. Khama contributed 100 oxen, wagons, tribal grains and other small livestock to the cost. State patronage was, in this way, creating an immense source of Church wealth, which fell within the traditional obligation of the state. Notwithstanding the mutual benefits which accrued from such a relationship, it has to be noted that Church membership and activities basically became a prerogative of the existing political elite, the aristocrat and the wealthy members of the society, who could afford to convert their cattle, game and crop produce into cash. Wealth also enabled the commoners (*batlhanka*) and settler (*bafaladi*) families to gain access into prestigious political positions through Church membership. In this way, Christianity played a crucial role in the state building process.

This development, however, worried Hepburn because he believed that the Ngwato Church was diverting from the LMS anti-establishmentarian - congregational heritage.³¹² He also feared that, by this strategy, Khama sought to dominate the missionaries and the Church which they had planted. Congregational influence made Hepburn very uncomfortable with any kind of Church polity. This, therefore, conflicted with Khama's understanding of chiefly power, which saw kingship as occupying supremacy in political affairs and archbishopric status in religious matters. For example Hepburn wrote:

'You will remember how clear and emphatic I was that notwithstanding Khama (whose sole and only chieftainship I am always ready to recognize and respect in all matters and in every way to the full outside the Church) yet I continued and I should continue to ... I pointed that I could not permit Khama (Christian man as I believe him to be) to exercise authority over the Church. He is not unconscious of the clear distinction I have always maintained between his proper chieftainship and the Kingship of Christ in the Church of Christ.'³¹³

This severe conflict between the two men reached some kind of a personal crisis for the missionary in 1891.

4.3. Hepburn - Khama Conflict

(i). The Causes and Reasons for the Conflict.

(i)(a). Kingly Power.

The settlement at Palapye was followed by a crisis of disillusionment, because of Hepburn's unrelenting attack on Khama's version of kingly power. For Khama, kingship was to be an integral part of Christianity, while Hepburn insisted on a total separation of Church and State. This mixing of political and religious issues, which offended Hepburn, was in consonant with Ngwato tradition. Mr. T.T.Bent, another eyewitness of these events, alluded to this when he wrote:

³¹². John Brown (Taung, South Africa) to LMS, Feb. 29, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1.

³¹³. W.C.Hepburn (Palapye) to E.Lloyd, June 2, 1890, SOAS: B47 JD F1.

'Everything in Khama's town is conducted with the vigour, one might almost say bigotry - of religious enthusiasm. The chief conducts in person native services, twice every Sunday, in his large round Kgotla (sic), at which he expects a large attendance. He stands beneath the traditional tree of justice, and the canopy of heaven, quite in a patriarchal style. He has a system of espionage by which he learns the names of those who do not keep Sunday properly, and punishes them accordingly.'³¹⁴

In Chapter Two and Three we saw how the BaNgwato rejected a monolithic western type of Christianity and its interpretations, and responded to Christianity in their own terms, as well as adding insights of their own. Influenced by Ngwato functions of kingship, Khama understood his close ties with the LMS on the basis of being the head of both the Church and the state. Hepburn himself wrote about Khama's activities saying:

'The King is described as a thorough Christian, who for many years has consistently translated his professions into his practice. He rules his people mercifully, justly and kindly, is friendly towards Europeans and their ways and is... one of the most hard-working men living.

Very early in the morning he is up and about his work. First thing in the morning, the people are gathered together in the Khotla (sic), or courtyard of the King's house, for prayer in a custom which is followed by the several headmen in charge of the several divisions of the town.

Then the King does his business in his courtyard, deciding cases of dispute, trying offenders, and hearing the grievances or requests of any of his subjects who approach him; and the remainder of the day is spent in the work of managing the numerous gardens and lands and cattle posts.

In the matter of religious education, Khama has shown himself [to be] an enlightened ruler by the hearty co-operation he has given to his missionary.'³¹⁵

Likewise, Khama saw the Church as an institutional embodiment of his Kingship, and government and a way which provided religious security. In his effort to augment these activities, he personally took part in religious events, and used the state's money and labour to build Churches throughout his territory and also supported the work of the LMS among other states, with his own funds. Khama, therefore, wanted to use the Church and its overlapping strands to consolidate his state. In welcoming the European missionaries, he had hoped that they would develop a type of Christianity that would support and strengthen his Kingship role. Unlike King Moshoeshoe of the Basotho, and King Sechele, of the Bakwena, who failed to reconcile their Kingly power with Christianity,³¹⁶ Khama never faced any personal dilemma by being a Christian King.

Hepburn complained that Khama's policies were weakening not only the King's attachment to the

³¹⁴. Bent, T.T., 'The Road from Mashonaland... Among the Chiefs of the Bechuanaland', *Fortnightly Review*, 52, vol. L1, June 1, 1892, p. 651.

³¹⁵. Hepburn, J.D. (1895) op.cit., pp. 318-9.

³¹⁶. Thompson, I., (1970) *Survival in Two Worlds - Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870*, pp.92-8; Livingstone, D., (1857) op.cit., pp. 12-15; Schapera, I., (ed) (1965) Vol.1, op.cit., p. 260.

mission, but was also affecting the spread of Christianity.³¹⁷ The Ngwato Christians insisted that the King was the heart, the mind and the unifying factor of every sphere of their lives. They rejected any attempt to separate the religious from the political, because the two worked together, for the benefit of his people. This connection was never seen as theocracy, because what appeared to be a religious leadership controlling the State religious purposes, may in fact have been the political leadership controlling religion for purposes of the state. In this, religion was highly exploitative for political ends. It also questioned societal unity and provided the basis for state legitimacy, sanctioning war and other activities.³¹⁸

(ii). Church Building Project.

Khama and Hepburn were in agreement that the rebuilding of the Church in the new town had to be given first priority. In consultation with the Church members, Hepburn engaged the services of a son of Mr. William Wilberforce, Philip, who was himself a qualified architect, to build the new church. A gracious building was successfully completed within three years.³¹⁹ Hepburn described it saying:

'The Church is a simple Gothic design, substantially built, and capable of accommodating fully one hundred people seated.'³²⁰

However, Lloyd, who had just arrived from his Lake Ngami tour, in contrast described it as:

'...a handsome pile, almost too good for a native Church - I mean as a waste of money which might do more in the coffers of the society. £3,000 is a large sum of money for a native Church here.'³²¹

Although there is no evidence that the money was raised by Christians alone, it is true that Hepburn argued that since this was a sacred venture, any form of contribution from the unbelievers was not to be accepted. When Khama sent some of his regiments to provide labour during the construction of the building, Hepburn turned them back, stressing that only believers were to be allowed to do so. Since the project had initially been commenced by all - Christians and non-Christians, a dispute broke out. The Ngwato Church members, therefore wrote to the Directors, saying:

'But in the middle of this work our teacher said that it ought not to be built by the people generally, it ought to be built by the Church member alone... He also said to the Church members, if they build they must not plough. He also said let the Church come out from the (authority of) chief. But the church members said we cannot be

³¹⁷. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op.cit., p. 1.

³¹⁸. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op. cit., pp.203-263; MacKenzie, J., (1871) op.cit., pp.397ff, 383f.

³¹⁹. J.D.Hepburn (Palapye) to LMS, October 7, 1891, SOAS: B48 F1 JA.

³²⁰. Ibid, p.345: the photograph of the building at the back of the page.

³²¹. E.Lloyd (Palapye) to LMS, January 8, 1892, SOAS: B48 F1 JA. Also see January 13, 1892, SOAS: B48 F1 JD.

without ploughing neither can we come out from (the authority of) the chief.'³²²

When the building was completed, Hepburn announced that it was to be used as a sacred sanctuary for Christians only. Although Hepburn was against the idea of mixing political and religious authority, he openly called upon the Christians to disobey Khama's orders and also to refuse to join military regiments. Lloyd, for instance, wrote saying:

'Mr H. replied, "No you must not obey the Chief even if he calls out your regiments because the Chief is not your master and lord, but you must obey the Lord Jesus alone." The whole Church objected to this, and the painful row went on from bad to worse between Mr.H. and the Church, and not between himself and Khama. Because the Church would not do his bidding in various matters, Mr. H. then blamed the chief - in Khama's absence - and so the chief and Mr.H. disagreed.'³²³

The two men could not give in to each other's demands because they both felt that their sphere of influence was being threatened. Hepburn openly told Khama that he himself was the leader of the ecclesiastical establishment, and that Khama had to rule outside. What angered Khama most was the fact that Hepburn called on the Christians not to take any orders from the King.

There was yet another factor, which worsened the relations between Hepburn and Khama. This resulted from the fact that, while the Church members had given large sums of money for the Church building project, Hepburn had also complained that they had not given enough. He called on those who had contributed £200 to give £2,000; those who had given £500, £5,000 and that Khama who had given £1,000 should give £10,000.³²⁴ When a general uproar followed his demand, he angrily walked out of the Church, crying and saying: 'You will no longer hear from me,' and indeed the last Sunday he was at Palapye he refused to preach. The assembled congregation had sent Motshwaedi, an honoured deacon and a close friend of Hepburn to plead with him. Motshwaedi asked the missionary saying; 'must they just return home again hungry?'³²⁵

There had already been another source of misunderstanding - the question of the Kalanga Mission.

(iii). The Kalanga Mission Conflict.

One of the causes of misunderstanding between Khama and Hepburn emanated from the past, when Hepburn wanted twenty catechumens to undertake mission work among the Kalanga people, but Khama objected, due to political considerations. At a Church meeting Khama vetoed this arrangement, because

³²². Church Members (Palapye) to LMS, January 13, 1892, SOAS: B47 F1 JA.

³²³. E. Lloyd (Palapye) to LMS, March 9, 1892, SOAS: B47 F1 JB.

³²⁴. Khama (Palapye) to LMS, November 10, 1891, SOAS: B48 F1 JA.

³²⁵. Church Members (Palapye) to LMS, January 13, 1890, SOAS: B47 F1 JA.

the target people lived in a territory claimed by both Khama and Lobengula, King of the Ndebele. This might have provoked Lobengula into military activity, and Khama, had promised Sir Henry Lock, the British Colonial High Commissioner at the Cape, that he would do all in his power to avoid a conflict. He also felt a responsibility to protect the peace of his people. He could therefore not permit such a mission to proceed, without first consulting Lobengula.

Despite this reasonable political caution, Hepburn furiously attacked Khama for usurping his ecclesiastical authority. Khama decided to write a letter spelling out the causes of their differences to the LMS Directors:

'I wish to let you know that the Rev. J.D.Hepburn who was missionary here has left very suddenly with the intention I believe of going home for the purpose of making certain statements or complaints in regard to Church matters. I wish to give you a few reasons as to the differences that have arisen between us. Mr.Hepburn accused me of preventing or opposing the spread of God's work amongst my people and others. This I wish to state is false. The Society no doubt know and the other missionaries and Europeans know that I have always done my best for the spread of God's word. Mr.Hepburn told me he wished to separate my town, the Christians from heathen, and they (the Christians) were not to be ruled by me in any way. He, Mr.Hepburn would rule them. This is a very serious matter trying to divide my people the town. The people in England are not separated the Christians or Members of the Church from those that are not (or sinners). If I allowed my people to be divided in this manner the consequences would be serious and I objected also during one Sunday service Mr.Hepburn called for twenty members of the Church to go out to teach the Makalaka who are under the rule of Lobenyula. He did not get anyone to offer to go until he told them he had two hundred pounds his friends had given to build a house, he would give that - he then got twenty to promise to go and called a meeting of some of the members of the Church and told them he was sending these men. The meeting refused to agree to this and I also objected, as I thought the proper way was to discuss the matter and also write to Mr.John Moffat who is in the Matabele and also to Lobengula.'³²⁶

Khama's objection therefore was not to the teaching of the Word of God, but the fact that to do so to a people, claimed by another King, would be looked upon as an attempt to win them to his own political domain and no explanation would make it appear otherwise to Lobengula. This would have caused war between the two. However Khama would not hinder any teaching that was clearly within the bounds of his jurisdiction, as long as his political interests were satisfied.³²⁷ When Hepburn refused to reach a compromise, Khama called the Church members to meet at the **Kgotla** and addressed them, saying:

'Church I refuse to be divided from you. Teacher, you take what does not belong to you. The teacher said "It is not right to call the Church down to the Kotla (sic)." The Chief said I have done so because you said in the ears of all these people, the Church is afraid of me (so won't work with me). The teacher has condemned the Church in saying it is afraid of me, while all the time I am one with the Church. ...If anyone

³²⁶. Khama (Palapye) to LMS, November 10, 1891, SOAS: B48 F1 JA.

³²⁷. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, September 22, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JB.

has heard me forbid the preaching let him speak. No one spoke (or testified).'³²⁸

The situation became untenable, and Hepburn had to go.

(iv). Hepburn's Departure.

Angered by all these events, Hepburn was adamant to return to England, to lay his case before the Directors. He was however back in Southern Africa within a short time, but Khama refused to allow him to enter his town.³²⁹ Hepburn appealed to the Cape Governor, Sir Henry Lock, who intervened and asked Khama to allow the missionary to pay a brief visit on certain conditions. Edwin Lloyd, for instance, wrote saying:

'Mr.Hepburn is expected to revisit Phalapye (sic) shortly, but in most painful circumstances. Mr.H. has appealed to the Government Sir Lock to intervene on his behalf to allow him to revisit Phalapye, Khama having forbidden him in the country. The Governor therefore told the chief that Mr. H. should be allowed to visit Phalapye on certain conditions, viz. to remain only a few days, and not to interfere with either Church or political matters.'³³⁰

Hepburn, therefore briefly, visited Palapye under the agreed conditions and tried to conclude his businesses. Lloyd gave a full description of his proceedings at Palapye. It was a short and painful visit. He met nobody except a man who ran to his cart to greet him as he arrived and a poor woman, he happened to have met on the rock beside the church. The woman cried as they shook hands, pouring out her heart in sorrow. Hepburn says that through the Government Magistrate:

'The next day Khama demanded the accounts of the Church and that I should place everything in his hands - Khama's. I complied with this demand and handed over everything with the accounts to Khama.'³³¹

Hepburn was extremely angry and complained that: 'Khama is allowing himself to act in a thoroughly native fashion.'³³²

Khama sent £1,000 to Hepburn, for a personal gift and enclosed a message, that he had nothing against him. This shows that Khama's harshness was not directed to the missionary as a person, but that it was a sincere attempt to protect the tradition of his people. While this did, to some extent, reconcile the two men, Khama remained adamant that Hepburn had to be replaced by a new missionary. In 1893,

³²⁸. Church Members (Palapye) to LMS, January 13, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JA.

³²⁹. E.Lloyd (Palapye) to LMS, February 16, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JB.

³³⁰. E.Lloyd (Palapye) to LMS, February 16, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JB.

³³¹. J.D.Hepburn (Wynberg) to LMS, March 23, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JB.

³³². Ibid.



Fig.20

A Waterfall (top) (From J.D. Hepburn, (1895, p.317) and a general store by a trader (bottom) at Palapye (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS).



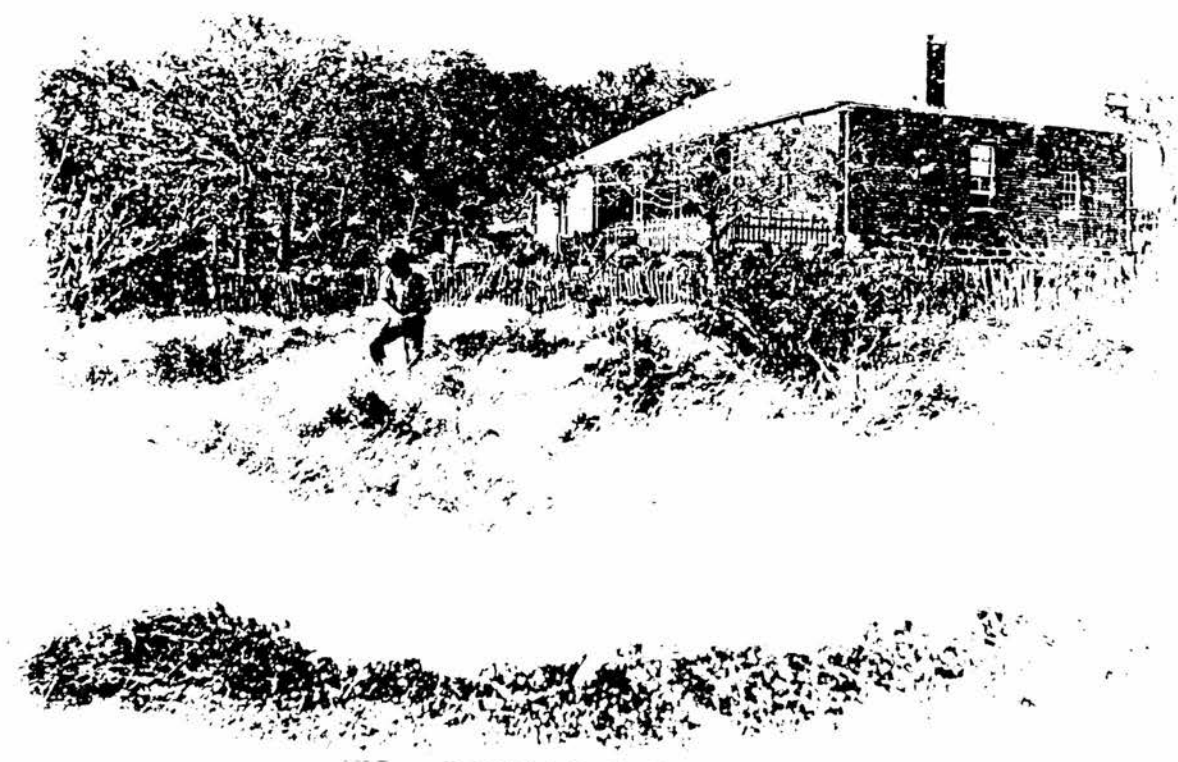


Fig.21
The Palapye Mission House. Note a man catching locusts (LMS
Africa Pictures - SOAS).

Hepburn died in England at the age of 53, apparently physically strained and heart-broken.³³³

(v). European Response to Hepburn's Departure.

What was the general European mood towards the Khama - Hepburn affair then? One of the European traders, named Tom W.Fry, who sometimes acted as Khama's interpreter, thought that Khama had treated Mr. Hepburn badly.³³⁴ Lock himself maintained a dignified neutrality over the issue, while A.J.Wookey, another LMS missionary temporarily at Palapye, was likewise neutral, although not a great admirer of Khama. The B.D.C., of which Wookey and Lloyd were members, exonerated and supported Hepburn. They warned against what they saw as Khama's authoritarian regime. Their minutes of a meeting on 3 May 1892 contain a 'Memorandum' which reveals that the committee were very critical towards Khama's attempt to dominate the affairs of the Church. The committee wrote to the Directors, saying:

'It is also quite evident that the chief's action arose in great measure, if not wholly, from a determination on his part to be paramount, not only in the management of the affairs of his own tribe as such, but also in matters purely ecclesiastical. It has further been made evident during these meetings that this same spirit prevails through the whole of Bechuanaland - that paramount chiefs and minor chiefs are making no secret of the fact that they are going to claim and exercise the right of jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs; that the appointment of missionaries and evangelists, in future, to be in their own hands, as far as towns or villages are concerned.'³³⁵

John Moffat, once an LMS missionary, but now appointed resident Assistant Commissioner in Bechuanaland, with his headquarters at Palapye, for the purpose of watching over the affairs of the northern protectorate and revisiting Lobengula on occasions of special importance, had promised to give LMS 'all possible co-operation when this does not trench upon official impartiality.' He blamed Hepburn for lack of tact and wisdom, although Hepburn described the reason for the conflict as follows:

'Khama has put forth his power as chief to the full... There is no free Church in Khama's town today... But Khama is resolute, and his people know it. His chieftainship is as the apple of his eye. I have touched it, and he is wounded beyond remedy.'³³⁶

When the Directors solicited Moffat's assistance in resolving the Ngwato-LMS misunderstanding, he replied saying:

'...and this your letter implies - then it would appear that both the missionaries have fallen successively into a similar difficult through some want of tact or perception on their part - or that on the other hand Khama must be occupying some impracticable position as to the duties and rights of missionaries. Surely it would be courting

³³³. Hepburn, J.D., (1895) op. cit., p.122-40.

³³⁴. J.D.Hepburn (Wynberg) to LMS, February 16, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JB.

³³⁵. B.D.C., May 3, 1892 printed in *LMS Annual Report, 1892*.

³³⁶. J.D.Hepburn (Wynberg) to LMS, March 23, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JB.

disaster again to grant Khama's request without some investigation and some understanding about the future.'³³⁷

Wardlaw Thompson, foreign secretary of the LMS had to travel from London to Palapye, to attempt to resolve the differences between the Ngwato Church and the LMS. He was accompanied by one of the most experienced former missionaries to the BaNgwato (1862-64), Roger Price, missionary at the time among the Batlhaping of the Kudumane station to the south. Thompson in part later described the proceedings of this meeting as follows:

'Then I dealt with the more serious question of principle, expressing as emphatically and distinctly as I could the opinion that the Christians were subjects of the State, bound like others by its laws and called to prove their Christian character by being the most loyal and obedient of all the people. At the same time I pointed out that there was another voice, the voice of conscience, which chief and the people alike must listen to, and another law, the law of God, which must be supreme. I dwelt upon the spiritual independence of the church in its worship and work, and pointed out that if a Christian chief was allowed, as chief, to interfere with the liberty of the church a bad chief might claim the right to do so also. I told them that we in England had in past times suffered much from the attempts of our rulers to interfere with our freedom, and that it was only after a long severe struggle that we obtained the recognition of our liberty. And I reminded them that times might come in the life of a man, or in the experience of the Christian community in Bechwanaland, when the law of God must be obeyed even though it might involve the penalty of disobedience to the law of the State.'³³⁸

Thompson's and Price's conclusion was that the conflict resulted from Hepburn's imbalanced state of mind. They therefore failed to tackle the main problem; the question of chiefly power, which remained unsolved for years. In fact, the **Kgotla** meeting addressed by Thompson, Price and Khama stressed this to be the source of the problem. The royal dynastic factions, led by Raditladi, the King's brother and a deacon of the church, vigorously discredited Khama's involvement in church affairs saying:

'We do not believe in the name of the teacher and of the chief but the name of Jesus only.'³³⁹

They also went on to say that:

'... they were well aware that the church was not to be under the control of the State, and that if the chief, as chief, attempted to interfere with them in their Christian life and duty they would speedily let him know that he was interfering in matters beyond his province.'³⁴⁰

Despite this complaint, the following sections show that when Raditladi, Mphoeng and their followers defected from Khama's political domain in 1895, they continued to see the Church as the source of

³³⁷. J.S.Moffat (Wynberg) to LMS, March 22, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JB.

³³⁸. R. Lovett, (1899), Vol.1, p.640.

³³⁹. Church Members (Palapye) to LMS, March 16, 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB.

³⁴⁰. Lovett, R, (1899), pp.640-1.

chiefly power and thus strove to maintain the link between the two.³⁴¹ At the end of the Thompson-Price consultations with the Palapye Church and general public, Khama having discussed the situation with his people and Lloyd, requested that the latter be appointed to Palapye, on the grounds that he was already acquainted with their customs and language.³⁴² Lloyd was not only the favourite for these stated reasons, but because in 1884 and 1890 he had been appointed to that mission station. But because of Hepburn's objection, to share a station with another missionary, he had to live at Shoshong (with Khama's protest) and frequently visited the Lake Ngami from there. Hepburn's reasons had been that his methods and approaches to teaching and evangelism contradicted those of Lloyd. Although the Directors did nothing about it, Khama said that the two missionaries should co operate in serving only one Church, one school and one town under one King.³⁴³ Clearly, the Christian Church had become an immense source of chiefly power, which Khama wanted to monopolize on and then use to consolidate his state.

Unfortunately, for Lloyd, the Directors opted for W.C.Willoughby, who was subsequently appointed to that station and laboured among the BaNgwato from June 1892 until 1903.³⁴⁴

4.4. Willoughby and the BaNgwato

(i). Appointment of Willoughby and Ngwato Response.

Willoughby was a man of great organization and administrative skills, strong, wise and tactful. The LMS Directors chose him because they believed that he would be able to accommodate the strong events which had engulfed Hepburn.

When J.S.Moffat announced W.C.Willoughby's appointment to Khama and gave him the probable date of his arrival,³⁴⁵ A.J.Wookey tells us that the King was not over pleased by this decision. In that connection, the latter wrote saying:

'The only remark Kgame has made which might indicate his feeling was; "why did not the Directors send them a man who knows Sechuana and who knows something

³⁴¹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, March 18, 1895, SOAS: B51 F1 JB.

³⁴². Khama (Palapye) to LMS, January 13, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JA.

³⁴³. E.Lloyd (Palapye) to LMS, July 7, 1890, SOAS: B47 JD F1; Enclosed are the notes of convention between Lloyd, Khama and Hepburn at Palapye, 30 May, 1890.

³⁴⁴. E.Lloyd (Palapye) to LMS, January 13, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JA; Church Members, (Palapye) to LMS, May 3, 1892, SOAS: B49 F1 JC.

³⁴⁵. J.S.Moffat (Palapye) to LMS, January 30, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JB.

about the country and people.³⁴⁶

Khama was, at least, glad to have a missionary in his town. He promised to help Wookey, who was temporarily in Palapye, on his way to the Lake Ngami, in building a house for Willoughby, as well as in teaching the new missionary their language. When Willoughby finally arrived, the Ngwato Church, in co-operation with Khama, sent one member of the Church every morning, to instruct the missionary in Setswana.³⁴⁷

The L.M.S. Director had already written asking for material assistance from Khama and the Ngwato Church, in connection with the building of Willoughby's mission house, to which Moffat wrote:

'I observed that in that letter there was no mention to the material assistance which in your letter you proposed to ask for towards the building of a mission house. It is just as well. You are aware that on a former occasion the chief put down a large sum of money for this very purpose - which was diverted to the Church fund and not therefore available.'³⁴⁸

Despite the fact that the Ngwato had already given large amounts of assistance in actual money, labour and in some other materials such as lime and bricks, they willingly promised to give further help. One Ngwato man made twenty-nine thousand bricks for the proposed mission house,³⁴⁹ while Khama offered to present forty oxen to the society, which subsequently raised £352 for the same purpose.³⁵⁰

(ii). Initial Impressions and Tasks

Willoughby saw the factor of language to be a priority to his mission work, because of its importance in understanding the ways of the people and communicating the message. While he learnt the language, he set himself to reconcile, reorganize and consolidate the Church. He thus started his long career, by attending to the erection of the station's buildings and digging pits for water supplies.³⁵¹ Unimpressed by Hepburn's Church building he wrote:

'Kanye is larger than Palapye Church and far ahead of others in beauty and convenience of internal arrangements, and built at half the cost ... due to the business ability of the Rev. James Good.'

The interior of the ...(Palapye) Church ... is very unsightly. The roof is not ceiled,

³⁴⁶. A.J.Wookey (Palapye) to LMS, March 6, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JC.

³⁴⁷. Khama (Palapye) to LMS, January 23, 1893; W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, July 3, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JA.

³⁴⁸. J.S.Moffat, (Palapye) to LMS, January 30, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JB.

³⁴⁹. J.E.Reid (Palapye) to LMS, April 30, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JC.

³⁵⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, May 28, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JC.

³⁵¹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, September 23, 1898, 'Review of Five Years Work at Palapye, 1893-8' SOAS: B55 F2 JB. Khama had bought dynamite for the mission.

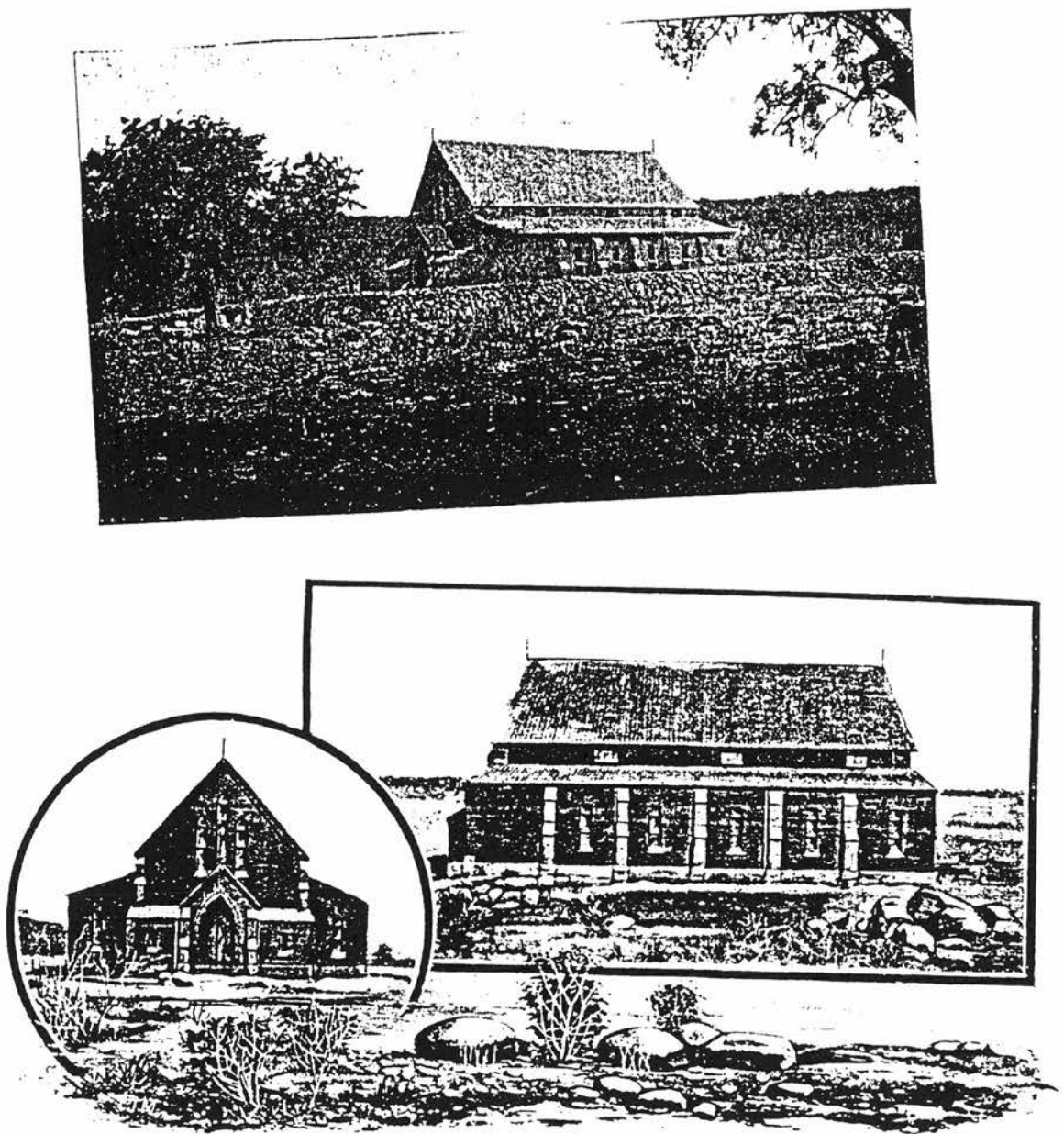


Fig.22

Different views of the Palapye church completed at a cost of more than £4, 000 in 1903.

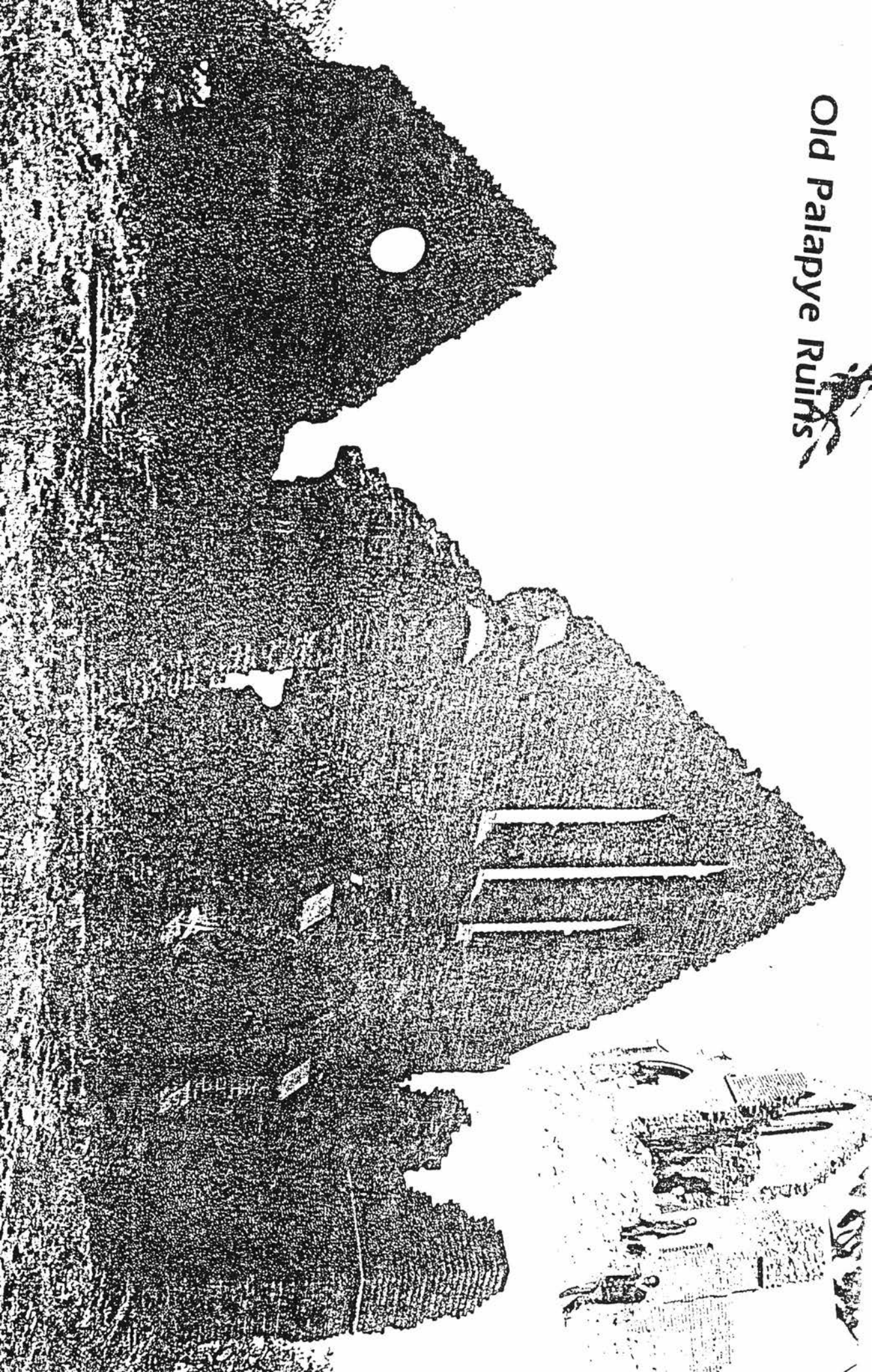
(Top by J.S. Horne, op. cit., p.253;

Bottom by J.D. Hepburn, (1895) p.246)

Two more other pictures at the back of the page (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS), and the ruins of that church as it stands today (Personal photograph).



Old Palapye Ruins



the walls are still rough and it is not provided with seats. Such individual natives as able and willing to leave a chair for their own convenience are permitted to do so; the others sit upon the floor.³⁵²

With Khama's help therefore, Willoughby repointed the building, erected the woodwork and stone fence to enclose the Church inside a large square courtyard, made paths to the gates and fixed windows so that they opened and closed properly.³⁵³ He also put in place the communion table and the framed wall-pictures which had been made by R.Reid, a missionary among the Ndebele for many years and who had now been appointed to Lake Ngami as A.J. Wookey's colleague. A brick platform, cemented on top with linoleum, extra chain, an organ and an ornamental tower to house a two and a half hundred weight bell presented by Khama were added or built on.³⁵⁴ For many years, Hepburn had in a sentimental mood, longed for a bell that would 'sound far' enough so that 'the Bamangwato children' found it as sweet to them as it was once to him.³⁵⁵ The bell was however not loud enough to reach people's houses, scattered over a wide area of the town. It was later transferred to a small European Church, which was built near the populace in 1897, but was still ineffectively managed by the two deacons who were responsible for ringing it.

(iii). Christianity, Politics and the BaNgwato

Willoughby devoted his first two years at Palapye being a political functionary of the state, acting as Khama's foreign secretary. In this capacity he translated official documents and interpreted for Khama and also gave him useful political advice. Willoughby, for instance, in a mixed mood, wrote in 1896 to the L.M.S. saying:

'I have done what I did merely from a sense of duty. But I quietly resisted the attempt to make the missionary a kind of interpreter and private secretary to the chief... for the future I am determined not to touch native politics.'³⁵⁶

Willoughby possessed an acute political awareness, which taught him to refuse to take sides in local internal misunderstandings, although he often leaned toward Khama. Khama himself never admitted this and often blamed him for supporting his opponents. Khama got rid of Moffat in 1896 for the same reason.

Like John MacKenzie, Willoughby believed that British imperial power had the responsibility to

³⁵². Willoughby, W.C., (1923), *The Native Life on the Transvaal Border*, pp.42-8.

³⁵³. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, April 30, 1893, *Annual Reports of Palapye, 1895-1897*, SOAS: B55 F4.

³⁵⁴. Ibid.

³⁵⁵. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op.cit., p.344.

³⁵⁶. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, 1896, SOAS: B53.

colonize and stabilize this part of Southern Africa.³⁵⁷ This led to the formation of the 1885 Bechuanaland Protectorate, which was subsequently followed by continuous attempts to compel the BaTswana to accept absorption into either the B.S.A.C. territory or South Africa.³⁵⁸ There was in fact a persistent doubt in the minds of the LMS Directors, as to whether the Bechuanaland mission, in general, was really worthwhile. They claimed that it was a costly venture, to run these northern stations, due to the fact that much of what was sold and bought in the Palapye stores was, for instance, laboriously transported for long distances.³⁵⁹ Willoughby himself complained that Palapye was thirty per cent more expensive, to live in, than any other South African Mission station. The LMS, therefore, believed that the future of the Tswana mission was inevitably with the Cape Colony, or with the eventual handing over of the protectorate to Rhodes and his B.S.A.C. Willoughby was however against the idea of transferring colonial powers to a commercial company. He therefore feared that these external, political matters would inevitably affect his missionary activities.

A month after his arrival at Palapye, the Ndebele - Rhodes war broke out.³⁶⁰ The move to occupy Shonaland and Ndebeleland, after Rhodes had achieved a great triumphant Royal Charter for his newly formed B.S.A.C., posed a new threat for Khama. Rhodes took this to mean that all the lands lying north of what was known as the Bechuanaland, and the territory to the north and west of the South African Republic and to the west of the Portuguese Dominions, was open to him. Rhodes' aim was to combine, colonial and commercial ambitions with some measure of imperial intervention, all of which would have enabled him to push a railway line northwards and then control the mineral resources of the region.

When the B.S.A.C. moved into Ndebeleland, in 1893, the Cape Commissioner, Sir Henry Lock, took a precautionary measure and ordered imperial forces to be stationed along Khama's borders. The aim was to crush Lobengula's opposition and protect Bechuanaland. Khama was therefore asked to help in 'defending' his country, although he was himself not aware of any immediate threat from Lobengula, he reluctantly complied.³⁶¹ But when Khama reached beyond the borders of his country, without any signs of Lobengula's army, he off-loaded his wagons and withdrew his men and went back to Palapye. Sir Henry Loch, the High Commissioner, Lt.Colonel H.J.Goold-Adams, Commander of the Imperial

³⁵⁷. Sillery, A., (1971), *John Mackenzie of Bechuanaland Protectorate*, pp.49-118; Mackenzie, J., (1887), Vol.1, op.cit.; Sillery, A., (1965), *Founding a Protectorate*, pp.40-44.

³⁵⁸. Ibid.

³⁵⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, December 31, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JC.

³⁶⁰. Church Members, (Palapye) to LMS, March 16, 1895, SOAS, B52 F1 JB.

³⁶¹. *The Times*, 'Khama'; September 21, 1893, p.8; Sillery, A., (1871), op.cit., p.154; Leonard, G., (1896), *How we made Rhodesia*; Selons, F.C., (1896), *Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia*.

forces and Rhodes, furiously blamed Khama for defection, cowardice and disloyalty.³⁶² In response to this attack on Khama, Willoughby remarked:

‘Poor fellow! To be used as a catspaw by a civilized power that is edged (sic) on by a commercial company that longs for certain very desirable chestnuts. He saw that before he left, but after all it is better to be the catspaw than the chestnuts’.³⁶³

The ‘catspaw’ was just about to be turned against an ally (Khama), who was now seen as the very desirable chestnut. Willoughby for instance wrote saying:

‘I am very much afraid that we have more trouble in store for Khama. Rhodes has been repaying Kgame for the help he gave the government by persistently circulating a false report that is evidently intended to weaken Kgame’s power and render him easier prey at no distant date. He evidently means to get the Protectorate under the thumb of the company, and to divide the country among British farmers for the benefit of his shareholders, and if I am not a false prophet, we shall see trouble within the next three or four years.’³⁶⁴

Willoughby further warned that the same route from Kudumane, through Shoshong and beyond, first used by Robert Moffat, David Livingstone and their successors, and indeed the whole of Bechuanaland, was now seen by Rhodes and his B.S.A.C. as their ‘Suez Canal’ which would lead them to the vastness of Africa.³⁶⁵ Among the Shona and Ndebele, the B.S.A.C. had committed brutality, and met every form of revolution by sheer force of militarism and powerful weaponry. This was followed by a constant stream of settlers to that new territory, which created many social problems in Palapye. More distressing to Khama was the marked increase in drunkenness, prostitution and congestion. All this incensed Khama’s lack of faith in the Chartered Company.³⁶⁶

Although Willoughby was in favour of the eventual absorption of Bechuanaland Protectorate into South Africa, which Khama opposed, the two men agreed that the wisest and safest thing was to remain under the protection of the Queen. The Magistrate’s Government was now seen as the lesser of two evils, by most of the Tswana leaders.³⁶⁷ This took the three Tswana Kings, Khama himself, together with Sebele I, of the BaKwena and Bathoen I, of the BaNgwaketse, to Britain in 1895 to protest against C.J.Rhodes’

³⁶². *The Times*, ‘Khama’ September 21, 1893, p.8; W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) November 30, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JB.

³⁶³. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, November 30, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JC; Sillery, A., (1965), op.cit., p.176.

³⁶⁴. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) March 16, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JB; Hole, H.M., op.cit., pp.12ff.

³⁶⁵. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, November 30, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JC; Sillery, A., (1965), op.cit., p.176.

³⁶⁶. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, November 30, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JB.

³⁶⁷. Dachs, A.J., *Khama of Batswana*, p.27; Hole, H.M., *The Passing of the Black Kings*, pp.274-5.

attempt to incorporate the Bechuanaland Protectorate into his B.S.A.C.'s territory.³⁶⁸ While the Cape Government, and the London Colonial Office, tried to stop Khama going to England, and to compel him to accept absorption into the B.S.A.A.'s territory, Willoughby says that:

'He (Khama) told me that if the H.C. wanted land or liquor he would have to go to England and find a door by which he could enter the Queen's heart. He asked me if I would go with him...'³⁶⁹

Willoughby, who had already spent a great deal of time assisting Khama, with external political affairs, agreed to Khama's request:

'If there really is a need for his going I do not see how I can refuse to accompany him.'³⁷⁰

Despite the fact that Willoughby had been in Palapye for only 18 months, and that he was barely fluent in Setswana, Khama trusted the missionary, rather than the colonial administrators and traders, who were only interested in the acquisition of land and wealth. At the age of 38, Willoughby was, by Ngwato standards, very young to act as Khama's mentor. For instance, when Khama later met Joseph Chamberlain, at the colonial office, he thought, at 59 years, he was too young to be in charge of such a large empire.³⁷¹ In the meantime in Cape Town Khama received a good reception from the Christian people and abstainers alike, who all rallied behind him.³⁷² Khama had already opposed the appointment of J.S. Moffat as Assistant Commissioner of Palapye, because the Colonial Office had refused such a request in 1885, but in 1892 imposed the office upon the BaNgwato, without warning or consultation. What further angered Khama was that J.S. Moffat had been empowered to levy taxes, issue licences, hold courts and perform other acts which undermined his own authority. Regarding this, Khama wrote to *The Times* saying:

'I believe in the English, in their justice and good government. They declined my offer, and I heard no more of the matter. And now, without formal conclave and agreement, when I should have the opportunity of consulting my headmen, and putting all important matters fairly before my people, they proceed to place a ruler in my town, so that I myself, before I can buy a bag of gunpowder, have to go and obtain a permit. This is not fair or open handed; it puts me in the wrong with my tribe, who say "How, then, is Khama no longer Chief in his own country?" and I feel deeply that I am slighted and made small. All my life I have striven for the English, been the friend of the English; have even offered to fight for the English and I am at

³⁶⁸. Ibid.

³⁶⁹. Parsons, Q.N., *Three Bechuana Chiefs in Britain in 1895*, Ph.D., Edinburgh University, 1983.

³⁷⁰. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to LMS, March 18, 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB.

³⁷¹. *The Times*, 'Khama', October 21, 1893, p.8.

³⁷². Sillery, A., (1965), op.cit., p.218.

last to be treated thus!³⁷³

The Cape negotiations were nonconclusive because Khama felt that the Cape Government were more concerned about the land and the payment of taxes, rather than the plight of his people. As an attempt to further discourage his visit, the London Office treated it as unofficial and thus refused to subsidize travel expenses, to and from London.³⁷⁴ When Khama and his colleagues decided to proceed with the visit at their own expense, both the Cape and the London Offices furiously attacked Willoughby for what they described as: '... the poison which the Rev. Willoughby has been pouring into the mind of Khama...'³⁷⁵ Having already made promises to eventually hand over Bechuanaland to the Company, 'when the proper time came', the British Government felt bound to do so.³⁷⁶

As soon as the Khama/Willoughby team arrived in London, Willoughby immediately contacted Joseph Chamberlain and requested a meeting. This was followed by, what the Colonial Office termed as, a social gathering, in which Khama, with Willoughby and Lloyd interpreting, made a simple and straightforward appeal to the Secretary, saying:

'There is no government we can trust as we trust that of the Great Queen. We pray you, therefore not to throw us away as if we were troublesome children who would not listen to their mother's words.'³⁷⁷

In response, Chamberlain simply advised the Kings to accept the Company's offer and then ended the interview and went off on a Mediterranean holiday.³⁷⁸ On returning to their hotel, the Tswana leaders, helped by Willoughby put their words on paper and resorted to the British public for support. This eloquent document, written in biblical language, met a frosty response from the colonial office. It opposed incorporation on religious grounds, stating that the licensing of liquor traffic would be a disaster for the Tswana country. The British public were already familiar with Khama's position, which in 1893 *The Times* had in part quoted saying: 'I fear strong drink more than I fear the assegais of the

³⁷³. Parsons, Q.N., (1972) *The Word of Khama*, p.20; W.C. Willoughby by (Palapye) to LMS, March 18 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB: In the company of the three Kings was Willoughby, five personal attendants: interpreters and secretaries: Gajewang, Simeon Seisa (Ngwato), David Sebonego (Ngwaketse) and Kwen-e-Tsile (Kwen).

³⁷⁴. Sillery, A., (1965), op.cit., p.218.

³⁷⁵. Ibid., p.215.

³⁷⁶. *The Times*, (London) August 2, 1895; Benson, M., (1960), *Tshekedi Khama*, p.7.

³⁷⁷. Sillery, I., (1965), op.cit., p.219.

³⁷⁸. *The Times*, 'Khama', October 21, 1893, p.8, also see *The Reformer*, 'Campbeltown',: 'Its Whisky and Temperance Work', October 31, 1895, p.3.

Matabele.³⁷⁹ This combination of the missionary propaganda and Khama's wise diplomacy, won the public sympathies.³⁸⁰ This campaign was helped by the fact that it coincided with the celebrations of the centenary year of the founding of the LMS.

Chamberlain had refused the Society's Directors, gathered in London for that event, any official involvement in the negotiations. But the Society, with its interdenominational delegation took this as an advantage to win the support of the British public. Wardlaw Thompson, the foreign secretary, for instance, had introduced the Kings to a packed assembly of the Board of Directors.³⁸¹ Willoughby, the tour manager, planned all the strategies of the campaign, aimed at mobilizing the British public into supporting this course. Missionary platforms and Churches, from one end of the country to the other, were only too willing to play host to such authentic guests and welcomed them enthusiastically.³⁸²

Hepburn's posthumous book (1895) and Edwin Lloyd's, (1895) published for the centenary, became immediate successes, and further awakened the British public to the nature of the problem facing Bechuanaland. In the introduction of the former's book, Mrs. Hepburn, was for instance, unimpaired in her admiration for Khama, who was already internationally well known, especially in missionary circles.³⁸³

From Church and temperance platforms, the tour had progressed to specifically political meetings, attended by civil dignitaries, Lord Mayors, captains of commerce and industry and the British press, all of whom fell over one another in support of this course.³⁸⁴ *The Sunday Times* editor, for instance, reported saying:

'The sable monarch stumping our country in search of political support to enable him to resist the absorptive capacities of Mr. Cecil Rhodes has succeeded in creating a considerable impression. The missionary syndicate which is running the pious and abstinent sovereign for all he is worth has displayed considerable shrewdness. The missionary feeling in England is immensely strong... and no British ministry can

³⁷⁹. R.I. LoveL, (1934), *The Struggle for South Africa, 1875-1899*, pp.45-51.

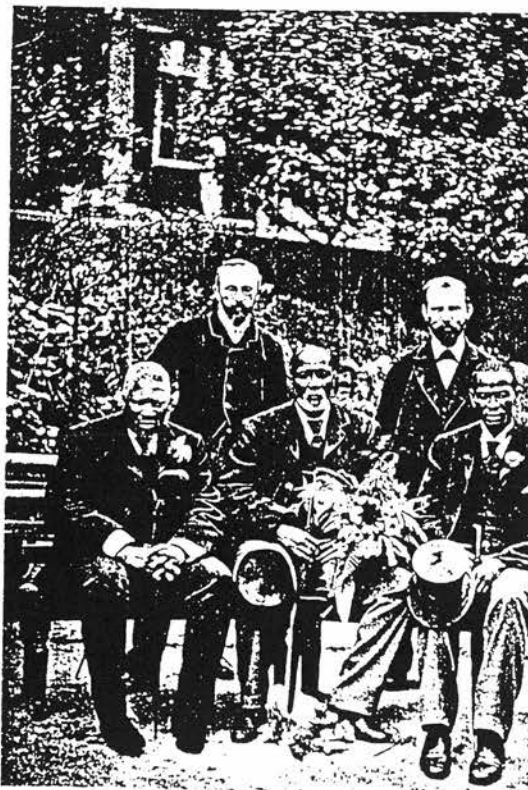
³⁸⁰. *The Chronicle*, October, 1895.

³⁸¹. Parsons, Q.N., (TBCB), op.cit., pp.90-4, 140.

³⁸². *The Times*, London, September 11, 1895; *The Saint James Gazette*, September 7, 1895; Sillery, A., (1952), op.cit., pp.70-1.

³⁸³. Ibid.

³⁸⁴ *The St. James Gazette*, September 7, 1895.



Khama in London
(1895)

TO BE RETURNED
TO THE EDITOR,
L. M. S.

LONDON MISSIONARY
LIVINGSTONE H
BROADWAY, S

Fig.23

BaTswana Kings in Britain in 1895: Bathoen, Sebele and Khama (sitting from left to right) with W.C. Willoughby and E. Lloyd standing (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS).

ignore its political influence.³⁸⁵

The Press described Khama as an ascetic and dignified figure, determined to use the power of the missionaries to avert the dangers of alcoholism and the absorptive capacities of the B.S.A.C. The editor of *The St. James Gazette* referred to his 'Egyptian' and 'clergyman' features, while W.T. Stead, editor of *The Review of Reviews*, ('Character Sketch', October 15, 1895, p.303,) compared him with Clovis and Abraham Lincoln and also described him as a 'corn on John Bull's toe', on which Rhodes was advised not to tread.³⁸⁶ Lloyd (1895) saw Khama as intelligent, of giving an impression that he understood English and that his sincerity, whether in professing his faith, or attacking drink was a force to reckon with. In a similar fashion Chirenji says that:

'The chief's performance during the London talks was the high water mark in his eventful life.'³⁸⁷

Notwithstanding the fact that Khama was the most influential figure of this campaign against the intentions of the B.S.A.C., it has to be acknowledged that its eventual success occurred through a joint venture, between the Tswana kings, the LMS and the British public. The missionary syndicate, led by such men as Wardlaw Thompson, Lloyd and various other LMS professionals and supporters, played an important role. Above all was Willoughby, whose quality and quantity work as tour manager and his contributions in the negotiations was of immense impact. In consultation with the LMS, he did all the planning and execution of the itinerary and the actual arrangements for the accommodation of the Kings. This included their shopping expeditions, visits to the doctors, getting them to the right public platform at the right time, introducing them to audiences and congregations, translating some of their speeches and addressing audiences himself, where required.

On returning from his holiday, Chamberlain found that the negotiations between the Tswana leaders and Dr. Rutherford Harris, a B.S.A.C. agent had collapsed, and the public campaign, by the Tswana missionary team, had successfully reached approximately forty towns and villages. This compelled the colonial office to rule against the B.S.A.C. absorption intentions.

Khama and Willoughby, with much satisfaction, reached Palapye on January 7, 1896, where after hearing their experiences and good report, the Ngwato Church wrote to the LMS, saying:

'He (Khama) says he was received joyfully by the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says he was taken to the places of worship, and to the houses in which the children are taught... He says that more than all the riches in England which he saw he rejoiced over the Church of the Lord. And now we testify our gratitude to our

³⁸⁵. *The Times*, 'Farewell to the Bechuana Chiefs', November 22, 1895, p.8.

³⁸⁶. *Ibid.*, pp.67-8; *Review of Reviews*, ed., W.T.Stead, October 15, 1895, p.315.

³⁸⁷. Chirenji, J.M., (1978), *Chief Khama and his Times*, p.31.

Fathers, for what the chief has told us: we your children, are reminded of the word which our Lord spake: "All people shall know you are mine when they see you loving".³⁸⁸

Although Khama's visit to Britain had discredited the B.S.A.C.'s immediate threats, the issue of the ultimate fate of the protectorate, remained uncertain. The government continued to promise, both South Africa and the B.S.A.C., the takeover at various times until 1910, with the uncertainty raging well beyond Khama's death, in 1923, and in fact well into the 1950s.³⁸⁹

4.5. Ngwato Christianity and the Khama's Decentralization Policies

Before 1896, Willoughby had concentrated his efforts on the capital, especially in Khama's political, secretarial work. In contrast, the indigenous Christians were, as early as January 1894, committed to spreading Christianity to the villages outside Palapye. But this created a problem because Khama who was suspicious of their motives, stopped these individuals preaching because he said that they were being inspired by Hepburn's divisive teaching. So despite Khama's support for the development of a self-propagating Church, he vetoed the campaign because he feared that these preachers, most of whom were not happy with Khama's refusal to allow Christians to drink liquor, would divert the allegiance of the Tswapong people from his rule. Khama's opponents now claimed that there were two Churches - Khama's and Christ's. In a statement made on a communion Sunday of August 5, 1894, Khama, for instance, called them the 'old Church' which he associated with Hepburn, saying:

'Let the old Church go to teach in another town, in another country, not in my country, not in my town - they are spoiling my people for me.'³⁹⁰

The dissidents tried to win Willoughby to their side, by sending deacons to the missionary, who could only send a message in returning saying: 'I have given the chief my heart and the chief has given me his heart'.³⁹¹

In desperation, they turned to J.S.Moffat, who himself, was not only an ordained minister, but also a senior colonial, political figure. While Willoughby thought it wiser not to get involved with such internal matters, Moffat readily took sides with Khama's opponents. Willoughby, for instance, wrote of this saying:

'Somehow Mr. Moffat has been brought to believe in them and even in their story.

³⁸⁸. Church Members (Palapye) February 17, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1 JC.

³⁸⁹. Picard, L.A., (1985), *Policies of Rural Development in Southern Africa: The Evolutions of Modern Botswana*.

³⁹⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Brighton) to LMS, September 23, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

³⁹¹. Church Members (Palapye) to LMS, March 16, 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB.

This was easier for him because they carefully told him everything from their side, apparently hoping for his political aid and the chief has for some reason been distrusting Mr. Moffat of late and has carefully refrained from taking him into his confidence, in this matters. He seems jealous of Mr. Moffat's interference, in matter between him and his relative³⁹²

It is evident that these opponents of Khama went to Moffat not only for support in ecclesiastical matters, but also because he was a man of political authority. In turning to Moffat on the strength of his political role and ministerial training, they were like Khama, attempting to mix politics and religion, which they bitterly opposed the latter for. Their engagements, with the Assistant Commissioner, led to a series of 'secret prayer meetings' in the magistrate's house, at the end of 1894.³⁹³ Khama, seeing the role played by Moffat in this affair, complained and threatened to separate from the 'larger Church'.³⁹⁴

On March 16, the Raditladi faction, possibly at Moffat's advice, wrote a long letter, appealing to the Directors, against Khama. Although there were only 16 signatories, they wrote saying:

'All these names are of people who have vowed to be crucified in the name of Christ - there are also some others.'

They further went on to state that:

'This strife arose on account of the teaching (sic), it was in 1894 the 27January - we came together, we being the Church of Phalapye we said what shall we do in the service of God? And we saw that we should teach people the word of God. And he did so. But the chief said - you are doing harm, you are spoiling people with the new teaching: again he said - you are teaching new doctrine of the Pharisees always: again he said: you teach saying - fear not man that kills the body... The word of which we were afraid was this: Let the Church be in the chieftainship, let it be ruled by the chief: but we refused. We who were a part of the Church: so there were two Churches: one of the chief - one of Jesus.'³⁹⁵

Five of the signatories, in fact, accounted for almost a third of subscriptions for the new Church building at Palapye. The key figures included deacons (Kgathi and Mphoeng), Khama's half-brothers (Raditladi and Mphoeng) and his son-in-law (Morwe) and the senior Church man of Khurutshe origin (Tumedi). Others were Tiro, Nkobebe, Kgosi-ae-Yang, Ntiro, Motlhapise, Kgotla-ea-etsho, Pudumaye, Selotate, Rra-Modisa, Rra-Kgamanyane and Gaebepe. Of the most important dissidents to Khama, was Raditladi, who, for a long time, had been a military leader, especially between 1890 and 1893, after the demise of Mokhutshwane (the former commander). It was also through his association with both the B.S.A.C. and Moffat, that his followers were later given a territory of their own, in the former's

³⁹². W.C.Willoughby (Cape Town) to LMS, March 18, 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB.

³⁹³. Church Members, (Palapye) to LMS, March 16, 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB.

³⁹⁴. Ibid.

³⁹⁵. Ibid.

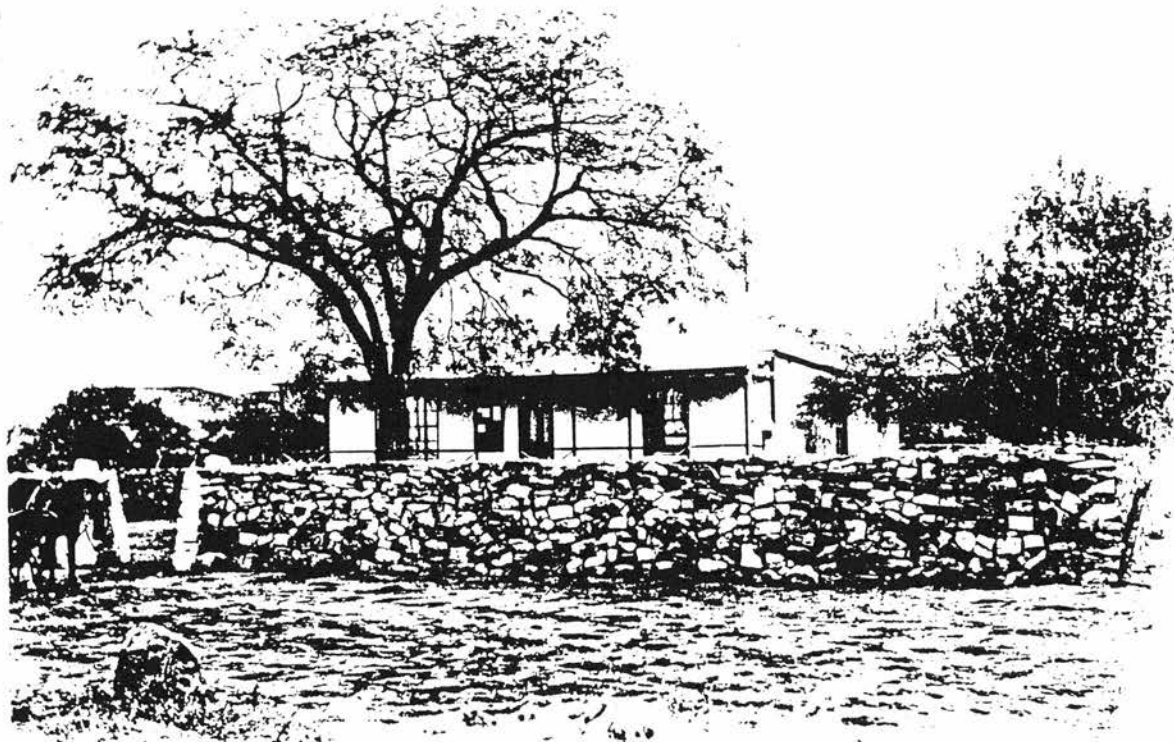


Fig.24

A Colonial Court House at Palapye (top), where secret prayers between the Assistant Commissioner, J.S. Moffat and Raditladi (the taller man with his son) and other dissidents took place.

territory. This conflict taught Khama to control the appointment of the diaconate and thus eliminate members of the royal family and other troublesome members of the Church. Although the Church afterwards continued to serve as a theatre of conflict and debate of state-Church matters, it never again posed any threat to the traditional state. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, it was becoming a subordinate part of the traditional state policies, with its future tensions directed against the 'papacy' of the foreign LMS control. This meant, that from 1896 onwards, the spread of Christianity in Ngwatoland was predominantly determined by two factors - first Khama's decentralization policies and secondly, the state-Church connections.

When Khama came back from England, in January 7 1896, he was faced by many other challenges to his authority. Some European inhabitants - such as Charlie Clarke, Tom Fry and others, were importing liquor and drinking it excessively. Although Sekgoma II, his son and heir had ruled exceedingly well in his absence, he had sold cattle, goats, sheep and all the karosses in Khama's house and had not given the money to his father when he returned. He had also quarrelled with his elder sister Besi, terrorized the Basarwa and deprived them of education and misplaced official documents, which forced Khama to opt for Ratshosa, his son-in-law, as principal secretary of state. Members of the Raditladi faction continued to cause problems for Khama, especially within the Church. On October 18, 1897 for instance, when Khama ordered most of the age regiments to collect wood near Mahalapye, under the leadership of Kebilaile, trouble broke out.³⁹⁶ On Sunday November 13, the two senior regiments, Malwelamotse and Maolala, chose Morwa Mogomotse to preach. Taking Romans 1.16 (I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ...) he attacked the Palapye **Kgotla** for hypocrisy (**boitemokanyi**), which in fact, indirectly, referred to Khama. On the 7th, Khama had addressed a **Kgotla** meeting in which he had named, Modisaotsile, Morwa Mogomotse, Ikitseng, Sephekelo, Molefhe and Motswaledi and prosecuted the culprits whom, he said, were misleading Sekgoma into war with him. Now Mogomotse took this opportunity to hit back. Senior deacons tried to warn him of the consequences of preaching a seditious sermon against Khama, but he would not listen. The deacons believed that, by doing so, he had contravened the law of God. This injunction was possibly based on Romans 13, which sees the citizens duty as being to obey the State and being submissive to the authorities. The news reached Khama, who on October 31, ordered Mogomotse out as he tried to enter the Church. This disrupted the whole Church service, but Khama was resolute and Mogomotse had to join James Hepburn, John Moffat, Mphoeng, and Raditladi, who had already melted before Khama's chiefly power and was expelled from Palapye. Years before this, Ratshosa had been banned from communion and dismissed as the secretary of state, on grounds of adultery.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶. Baruti Kalayakgosi (Palapye) to Willoughby, November 28, 1897.

³⁹⁷. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 27, 1898.

With all this internal, political and ecclesiastical pressure concentrated at Palapye, Khama sought for strategies of easing himself of this tension. In fact, it was at the end of his visit to Britain, that Wardlaw Thompson, the foreign secretary of the LMS urged Khama to try to change his policy and experiment with decentralization, saying:

'If he could trust his people sufficiently to let his headmen and subordinate chiefs settle down in various parts of his country and devise some means of keeping in touch with them, and settling only important questions himself, he would greatly help his people in view of days to come. I suppose however, such a change would be too utterly revolutionary to be thought by him for a moment.'³⁹⁸

In response to this letter, Willoughby wrote saying:

'Your suggestion of decentralizing the government of the tribe is sensible... but not at all likely to be acceptable by Khama. This living together in large community is full of evils. The people have so much difficulty in getting the necessary thing, or rather some of them, that they spend long periods of time in their gardens and at their cattle posts; and this is a great hindrance to education. Since I came home, for instance, I have been unable to begin my classes on account of the people being at their gardens, alone they stay week after week. The gardens... they cannot return even on Sundays.'³⁹⁹

In less than two months, however, Khama was showing great liberalization. He was allowing the Baphaleng, Batalaote, Bakhurutse and Bakalanga to have a more devolved government. Henceforth, they administered justice among themselves: judged by their own chiefs and chose their own leaders, which was something unthinkable during Sekgoma I's lifetime. Although they had more authority and independence, the running of cattle-posts and regiments remained unchanged.⁴⁰⁰ By 1898, Khama had started a vigorous programme of decentralization of his administration, which had strong implications for Christianity. Willoughby wrote saying that:

'Khama says that his object in doing this is to occupy his country better, so that he may cut away the excuse which the white man uses for depriving him of it.'⁴⁰¹

This decentralization policy, coupled with the relationship between chiefly power and the Church, greatly facilitated the spread of Christianity.

i). The Defection of the Raditladi Party

On March 23, 1897, Willoughby gave an account of the incidences which led to the defection of the Raditladi Party from Khama's domain, saying:

'When the people quarrel they quarrel with a good deal of vigour. It is the only occasion upon which one finds them putting their whole heart into the task of the

³⁹⁸. Thompson (London) to Willoughby (Palapye) November 28, 1895.

³⁹⁹. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., February 12, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1 JB.

⁴⁰⁰. J.D. Hepburn (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 21, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1.

⁴⁰¹. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 22, 1898, SOAS: B55 F1 JB.

present moment... But always there is too strong a tendency to mix up the affairs of the Church with those of the State... (they) wanted to carry their quarrel into the Church and both wanted to enlist the missionary as chairperson but mainly they (Raditladi Party) wanted freedom to drink beer, and the right to do their own governing. And from Khama's side the affair was also purely political. He objected to the beer, and he was as jealous as oriental rulers always are of any interference with him as autocrat.⁴⁰²

The Raditladi faction had greatly weakened Khama's power. Their final departure from the Ngwato territory, when Khama was in London, was a relief. They were temporarily settled, by Rhodes' chartered company, at Ramokgwebana and later to the neighbourhood of Motloutse. The subsequent Ndebele war and rinderpest disaster, which had killed all their transport oxen, delayed the Company from giving them a permanent location.

Although Raditladi was seen as the head of the party, Mphoeng, being the eldest brother, was selected as chief:

'He (Mphoeng) walked along and talked about the money which they had subscribed to the Church in Hepburn's time. That money they wanted back now that they were going away...'⁴⁰³

In this new settlement of Ramokgwebana there were only about 400 adults, among which were a relatively large number of 30 Christians. LMS deemed their settlement too far away to be part of Palapye and too small for an independent mission, under a new European missionary. However it was not long before they were themselves further torn by disputes. Raditladi, Seeletso, Rramorotona and a few others quarrelled with Mphoeng and went to Bulawayo to ask the Chartered Company to give them a settlement of their own, somewhere apart from Mphoeng. Since it was rumoured that they would be settled permanently in Ndebeleland, Willoughby agreed this with Helm and Reid, LMS agent among the Ndebele, that in the event of that move, they be connected with either the Hope Foundation or Bulilima Mission. The uncertainty of their eventual and permanent settlement was unbearable. They could not take any practical steps, nor could they be part of the Ngwato Mission or get a teacher of their own.⁴⁰⁴ In the meantime, Dambuza, an indigenous minister of the Free Church of Scotland, met Raditladi's son and one or two lads from the Ramokgwebana settlement at the Lovedale Institution. These boys invited the minister to come and be their missionary. However, some of these defectors were already carrying out preliminary negotiations with Khama, for their own individual return to Palapye. LMS Directors on the other hand were concerned that, if the Presbytery was allowed to establish work amongst themselves, the move would introduce Presbyterianism in Palapye. Willoughby

⁴⁰². W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 23, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JA.

⁴⁰³. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴. Ibid.



Fig. 25

- Territory offered by the British South Africa Company to Khama, Sebele, and Bathoen in October 1895
- Additional territory awarded by Chamberlain in November 1895 to the three chiefs over and above the chartered company's offer
- ▨ The railway strip that Chamberlain agreed to transfer to the company
- ▧ Territory claimed by Sekgoma, the Tawana chief, but tentatively granted by Chamberlain to Khama

Disputed territory between Khama, the British South Africa Company and Lobengula.

told the Directors that, on his way to buy corn in Mafeking, he met Damboza in October 1896, on his way to join the Raditladi Party as their missionary. He thus wrote:

'I know nothing of him. But it does not take a very intimate acquaintance with natives to be able to imagine just how the whole thing came about, nor to imagine what the result will be, if the Free Church of Scotland does not interfere. I certainly think the Free Church of Scotland should not interfere until we have the opportunity of deciding whether it is possible to help them. One finds it difficult to sympathize with this ordination of natives who are not needed for mission work in connection with the Presbytery... The placing of this teacher in Bechuanaland, except that it is not good to let any of our people have an idea that they can draggon their missionary into their littele tribal squabbles, by threatening to call a Native minister from Lovedale.'⁴⁰⁵

By March 11, 1897 Damboza had welcomed over twenty new members into the Church. However, while Damboza was busy at work, the superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission in Ndebeleland - Rev. I. Shimmin, who had written to Rev. Appleby of Mafeking mentioning that he had received a letter from Raditladi, stating that the work may as well be taken over by the Wesleyans.⁴⁰⁶ Willoughby also wrote concerning this saying:

'He (Shimmin) came to me in the most strictly honourable way, and saw at once that the cause which is greater than Wesleyanism or L.M.S.ism would not be served by their interference with the work. At the same time it would be better that the Wesleyans should take over the work and become responsible for it, than that it should remain permanently as it is now, under Damboza, who is apparently responsible to nobody but Damboza.'⁴⁰⁷

When Raditladi learned of A.J. Gould's residence among the Bakhurutshe at Selepeng in 1900, accompanied by another Mokwena renegade, Banaani, he came to visit the missionary and asked him to form them into a united Church. Although his request was not granted, Gould did visit them and found:

'...so much intelligence and knowledge of the scriptures amongst the candidates for membership.'⁴⁰⁸

Their connection with Khama and the Palapye Church ended when they were permanently settled by Rhodes' Chartered Company inside what is now Zimbabwe. Their town was named after their leader Mphoeng and is still known by that name today.

ii). Sekgoma's People and Other Outstations

The unsettlement of Sekgoma's people resulted from political conflict, that arose between Khama and Sekgoma and began to build up from 1897 onwards. Khama accused his son of conspiracy, which he

⁴⁰⁵. Ibid., Also see Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 9, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JD.

⁴⁰⁶. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 23, 1897, S.O.A.S.: B54 F1 JA.

⁴⁰⁸. J.A.Gould (Selepeng) to L.M.S., June 1, 1900, SOAS: B58 F2 7/7.

blamed on certain, principal members of the Church, whom he said instigated him to take that course.⁴⁰⁹ Khama wanted Willoughby to preach against them and also to impose stringent disciplinary measures on them. Although Willoughby refused to do so he blamed this on Ratshosa, saying:

'It is an attempt of a wily and unprincipled schemer, named Racosa to secure the expansion from the tribe of the chief's children, except the daughter which he has married. Years ago this man was a member of the Church, but was expelled for immorality. He is very well known by Europeans, and there is a singular agreement as to his character. Of late years he has been a bitter opponent of avoiding the alienation of such Christians as might be inclined to support his pretensions, and also because he knows that the chief would not support him in any open attempt to injure the Church. His wife is Khama's favourite daughter and he alone has now any influence with the chief.'⁴¹⁰

On the other hand, Sekgoma complained that his father was neglecting him, in matters of importance, and feared that he would favour Ratshosa for his succession. Sekgoma now conspired with Kgamane, Khama's brother, against his father. But Khama foiled their attempt to weaken his authority with the support of the Assistant Commissioner, who had attended the **Kgotla** meeting in which, Khama ordered both men to remove themselves from Palapye. Although the Assistant Commissioner had settled this dispute, it broke out again in 1898 with renewed vigour and without any side willing to compromise. Now Khama insisted that Kgamane and Sekgoma and their followers were to go to Lophphe. He told the **Kgotla** that Sekgoma's succession was to be decided upon when the occasion arose. Of the 5,000 men present, in the **Kgotla**, when Sekgoma's resettlement was resolved, only 300 to 350 were open followers of Sekgoma. They were to gather their crops and leave the town immediately.⁴¹¹ Khama had deliberately settled the two men in one location, of which Williams wrote saying: 'It won't be long before Khamane and he (Sekgoma) come to cross purposes'.⁴¹²

Kgamane, himself, had been appointed paramount chief of the Baphaleng and Bakaa at Shoshong, but was acting above his power and thus clashed with the people. The two men were now being settled in a location far away from Palapye, but their prolonged stay at Palapye, angered Khama. When Sekgoma's supporters partook of the Church communion, for instance, Khama absented himself, saying:

'There are members of the Church who have deliberately plotted against my authority. I cannot come if they are there. My heart would not be right towards them... Well Monane [Mr. or Sir] I do not wish to be a hindrance to any one else. The member of the Church ought not to be guided by my action in this matter. Let each judge for

⁴⁰⁹ H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 29, 1899, SOAS: B56 F3 JB; Partridge (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 30, 1899, SOAS: B56 F3 JB.

⁴¹⁰ W.C. Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 23, 1898, 'Review of Five Years Work at Palapye, 1893-1898', p.26, SOAS: B55 F1 JC.

⁴¹¹ W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 6, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

⁴¹² H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., November 12, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

himself. I have not, nor do I intend, saying a word to any of them.'⁴¹³

This caused further serious strife. Although the planned removal of Sekgoma's people eventually took place, it was further delayed by the Boer War at the end of 1899. They were, therefore, temporarily settled at Mogonono village on April 1, until the end of the Boer threats in 1900. In the meantime, the threat of the Boer invasion united the BaNgwato and the intentions of the former were defeated. This however disrupted the mission work because Colonial troops, despatched to reinforce Khama's regiments in protecting the country against the marauding Boers, occupied and used the Church and school buildings as military forts. The agricultural activities were equally disorganised and resulted in the low economic productivity of 1900, which was made worse by the outbreak of locusts.⁴¹⁴ Notwithstanding all this suffering, the missionary Williams found that:

'The War has been a source of wealth to the people. Stock of all kinds has tripled in value. Today a sheep fetches £5 to £60 and goats the same, oxen £25 and £30 each.'⁴¹⁵

At the end of the war, Khama's attention immediately shifted back to Sekgoma's people, whose temporary residence at Mogonono village had marked the beginning of the spread of Christianity in that district. Of the 2,000 people who had followed Sekgoma, 66 had been part of the 480 Church members on the Palapye role. This also consisted of seven deacons, 110 scholars and eight teachers of the Palapye Church and school. The most important deacon, to Sekgoma, was the evangelist and minister, Baruti Kalayakgosi, once Alice Young's former senior teacher at Palapye.⁴¹⁶ Despite his outstanding abilities, Sekgoma still wanted to have his own white missionary. But Khama determined to create some form of political and religious dependence on Palapye, would therefore not allow such an arrangement to take place. When they, for instance, moved to Lophephe, Howard Williams, who was based at Shoshong from 1900 with Khama's approval, was appointed to take charge of the Palapye outstations. In that position, Williams was expected to maintain a constant contact between Palapye and such outstations as the Lophephe. Khama himself insisted that Sekgoma, and other chiefs in his territory, should pay homage to his kingship and also recognise the Palapye Church as the headquarters of Ngwato Christianity. Palapye's supremacy was subsequently reinforced by the role played by both Ngwato evangelists and Williams. After one of his visits, Williams, for instance, wrote saying:

'I have been to see them twice. The second time they gave me about £25 phalalo. This brings up last year's subscriptions to £111 the largest sum they have contributed.'⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³. H.Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 21, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JB.

⁴¹⁴. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 21, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JB.

⁴¹⁵. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 11, 1900, SOAS: B58 F2 7/7.

⁴¹⁶. H.Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., November, 1899, SOAS: B56 F4 JA.

⁴¹⁷. H.Williams (Shoshong) to L.M.S., July 4, 1900, SOAS: B58 F2 27/7.

By the use of these Church men, who were materially supported by the Palapye Church and who visited various outstations scattered over a wide area, Khama exerted his kingly power, wherever they went. These men, were in fact, at times seen as representatives of Khama's rule or rather as operating under his patronage. This attitude stretched beyond the territory occupied by the BaNgwato people. In fact, most of these people looked to Khama for the supply of school teachers and evangelists. The establishment of the BaTawana Mission is a typical example of the patronage system, which enabled Khama to use the church and its agents to promote his political objectives, in the process of Church planting. However this appendage of Khama's political machinery, somehow led to the development of a self-evangelizing, self-supporting and a self-governing Church. This is so because, when the first evangelists were sent from Shoshong to Ngamiland, on April 26 1877, among whom were Gogakgosi (possibly Oakotse), Rampodu, Kuati (Kgathi or Kgwathe) and Motlhapisi, the whole project became Ngwato financed and run.⁴¹⁸ Khama personally donated £100 towards the project, because he saw it as an important venture, in both the spread of Christianity and the extension of his political influence in the north. The LMS had refused to support the work because it held a paternalistic view that Africans could not do missionary work, without close European supervision. They, in 1896 for instance blamed Khukhu for lack of Christian zeal and incapability, saying: 'let it be borne in mind... he is a native and inexperienced.'⁴¹⁹ It was however through the sole efforts and initiatives of this, so called 'inexperienced' and 'incapable' man that the LMS work in Ngamiland was established and sustained for several years.⁴²⁰ The European missionaries themselves only paid occasional visits from Shoshong and Palapye, due to threats posed by malaria. It is also interesting that when Moremi, King of the BaTawana made a request for teachers, he sent his messengers to Khama, not to the missionaries. Since this is what Khama had been waiting for, his response was immediate.⁴²¹ The expansion of Christianity throughout the Ngwato territory had therefore to be done within the confines of his chiefly

⁴¹⁸. *L.M.S. Annual Report*, (Palapye) 1898 and 1900: H.Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 25 and April 1, 1899, B55 F1 JB.

⁴¹⁹. *L.M.S. Annual* for the year 1892, Vol.42, p.196; *Annual Report for the Year 1894*, Vol.44, pp.231-2.

⁴²⁰. *L.M.S. Annual Report for year 1890*, Vol.25, p.27. Mogodi was in 1925 awarded posthumously, by the L.M.S., a certificate of meritorious service. This was rather hypocritical since they refused even to ordain him. Diphukwe, his colleague, was dismissed by the B.D.C. for drunkenness, but later reappeared in 1903 in Moshupa as a minister of a fast growing Native Independent Congregational Church. Also see E.Lloyd, (Kanye) September 23, 1903 and March30, 1905: B.N.A. R.C. 10/11 June 28, 1911.

⁴²¹. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op.cit., pp.52-54.

power. In September 1891, King Moremi had died and was in due course succeeded by Sekgoma II.⁴²² Although Sekgoma himself became a Christian King, he rejected Khama's patronizing attitude. He subsequently wanted to be an independent King with an independent Church and missionary. In January 1901, for instance, Willoughby wrote:

'Sekgoma, of the Batawana, is here. He has a quarrel with Khama respecting the boundary. He thinks the Queen's officers in this part do not like him, and thought he would go and see the Queen herself and tell her that he was Khama's equal not his inferior etc.'⁴²³

When Sekgoma came to protest against Khama's political dominance over his territory, he brought with him Shomolekae, the LMS agent stationed by the Palapye Church in Ngamiland since 1892. Although this evangelist was financially supported by the Palapye Church, he wanted to act as an independent minister.⁴²⁴ Willoughby writing concerning his visit to Palapye said:

'He wants power to administer the communion to baptize and to marry; but he does not want to be ordained. He is content to be as he is in status, only he pertinently asks who is to do these things. Khukwe has some informal powers for the capital from Wookey, but Shomolekae's Makaba are far from here. When I have seen everything for myself it may be wise to tell Shomolekae that he may do some of these things till a missionary comes. I do not mean anything formal; you know my sentiments on native ordination I think? Do you think there would be any objection to my authorizing him to do what any layman in a home Church has power to do?'⁴²⁵

In 1901 Khama and the BaNgwato still expressed a deep interest in Ngamiland. They continued to provide their men such as Modongo Matenge, of Kalanga origin, as evangelists, as well as wagons and oxen in order to sustain their influence there. But the calls for independence, by both the Tswana evangelists and Sekgoma, were beginning to weaken Khama's influence. The transfer of Peter Gaongale, from Ngamiland to Shoshong, in 1899 contributed tremendously to that process. While Peter had promoted Ngwato interests in that region, his transfer left evangelists, like Mogodi and Shomolekae, who even though supported by the Palapye Church were against the extension of Khama's political domain to Ngamiland. In 1900, for instance, Mogodi snubbed Khama's interference in Tawana politics. But due to their dependence on Palapye for support they generally continued to work under the oversight of the Palapye Church. In 1899 Howard Williams reported that he had received £100 from

⁴²². L.M.S. Annual Report for Year 1886, Vol. 36, p.171. Before this Dithapo, Letsholathebe's brother, acted regent because Sekgoma the rightful heir was at 22 years too young to rule. E.Lloyd (Kgalagadi Desert) to L.M.S., June 22, 1891, SOAS: B48 F1 JD.

⁴²³. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., January 10, 1901, SOAS: B59 F1 11/2.

⁴²⁴. Brown, J.T., (1902), *The Apostle of the Marshes: The Story of Shomolekae*. He was an old servant of John Mackenzie and was a product of the Moffat Institution.

⁴²⁵. W.C. Willoughby (January 10, 1901) op. cit. L.M.S. had no regard for African Christians. They saw them as incapable.

them for **Phalalo** (literally meaning the annual Church subscriptions for membership and evangelical work) and from other special contributions and the selling of books.⁴²⁶

Khama's commitment to using Christianity to extend his political interests is also exemplified by the activities of the Palapye Church in the Tswapong region. When Williams, the missionary responsible for the Palapye outstations, began visiting the Tswapong villages such as Ratholo, Mogonono and Sefhare and other villages outside of Palapye in 1901, Khama saw it as his responsibility to provide oxen, wagons and his own evangelists and teachers.⁴²⁷ These outstations, in fact, also looked to Khama for the provision of such needs.⁴²⁸ In the same year Khama gave Williams and Willoughby £1,727.17 to be used in the building of schools and Churches in his territory, especially in the districts outside Palapye,⁴²⁹ of which Willoughby wrote saying:

'I am afraid that this must not be quoted as proof of the enthusiasm of the tribe for either education or religion, though it is an undoubted proof of Khama's in both.'⁴³⁰

At Ratholo, Christianity had been planted for the first time in 1864 when Roger Price, accompanied by some BaNgwato Christians, visited the area. Of this, John Mackenzie later wrote saying:

'Mr. Price took the towns lying in the centre of the mountain range, meeting in the courtyard of the Maunatlala. He was assisted by Khamane, the second son of Sekhome, and two or three others.'⁴³¹

In 1896 Ratholo had about four or eight wards under chief Setlhabi, who was seen as a subordinate of Khama. In 1890 the Palapye Church had appointed Noke Modisa-wa-Kgosi as teacher and evangelist there. In 1900 there were about 86 Church members, 65 pupils, 7 teachers and 12 substations, under Noke.⁴³²

Through Khama's decentralization policy, the Baphaleng and Bakaa were resettled to Shoshong in 1898 with Peter Gaongale, who was himself a Ngwato headman, as their evangelist from 1899, after he had done satisfactory work in Ngamiland. Shoshong had 25 Church members, 41 pupils and 3 teachers in

⁴²⁶. H. Williams (Palapye) to B.D.C., July 1 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JB.

⁴²⁷. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 10, 1901, SOAS: B59 F1 6/4.

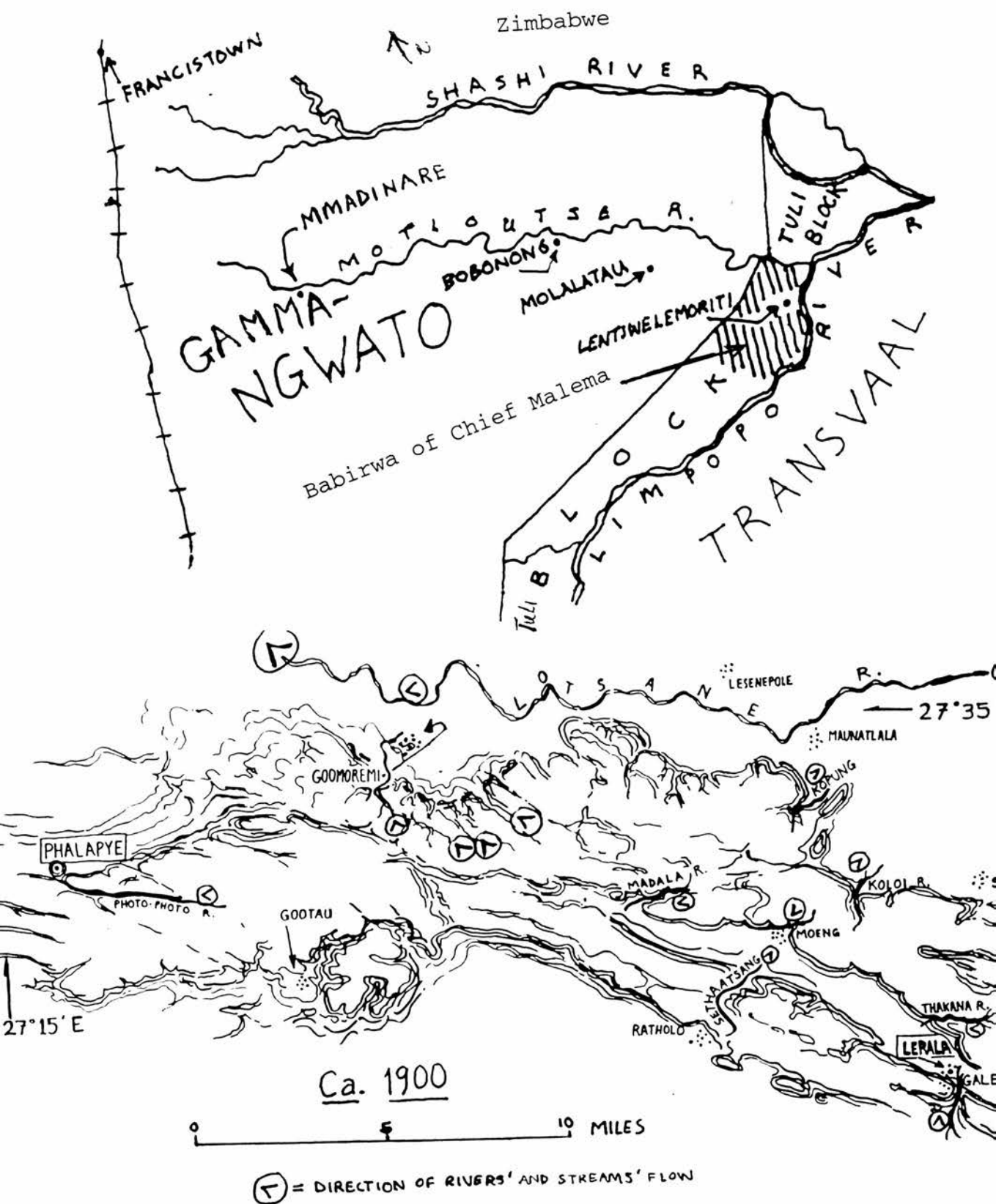
⁴²⁸. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., 'April-June Report', 1901, SOAS: B59 F.

⁴²⁹. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 8, 1901, SOAS: B59 F2; May 16 1901, SOAS: B59 F2 17/6.

⁴³⁰. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) June 5 and 11, 1901, SOAS: B59 F26, 6/7.

⁴³¹. Mackenzie, J., (1871) op.cit., pp.397-8.

⁴³². W.C. Willoughby (Brighton) September 23, 1898, op.cit.



(T) = DIRECTION OF RIVERS' AND STREAMS' FLOW

Fig. 26

The Tswapong Hills, Mmadinare and Bobirwa, where several of the Palapye Church outstations were located.

Thanks to Q.N. Parsons for the map.

1900.⁴³³ Like the Shoshong residents, Chief Motsumi's people had been dispersed from Palapye and settled at Motloutse in 1898. With a population of about 700 in 1900, the village had about 39 Church members, 152 pupils and 14 teachers and five schools under the evangelist Peter Morutsi.⁴³⁴ This outstation had 30 Church members, 160 pupils, 6 substations and 8 teachers by 1900. In 1897, the Palapye Church sent evangelist Ramotswing Seema to work at Sefhare, which was first visited by Willoughby in 1896.

In each outlying station there was a school, a Church and an evangelist, who kept up a formal contact with the Palapye Church and Khama's government. In most cases the school automatically replaced the regimental systems of bogwera and bojale, which was rapidly declining in influence. All these evangelists were deployed from Palapye and their dispersal became a centralizing check on the decentralizing process. Since they were supported and sent by the Palapye Church and Khama, they had the obligation to remain accountable and loyal to Khama's policies. This became an important strategic means for evangelical and political influence. Khama was, in fact, very particular with the appointment of these evangelists. Only those who strengthened his kingly power were chosen. Peter Morutsi, mentioned above, for instance had to be recalled from service in the Kweneng district at Khama's request because Khama refused imported evangelists to be used. W.C. Willoughby, in reference to this issue for instance, wrote saying:

'The teachers are the best I could find. They are both intelligent men. But they have no training, unfortunately. Khama refused to let me bring up native teachers from the south, and none of his people have been trained.'⁴³⁵

The mission to the Kalanga was one of the most important centres for Khama. It also shows how Khama used Christianity to extend both his political power and the interests of the Palapye Church. The Kalanga came into the Ngwato Christianity in 1872, when James Hepburn, accompanied by Khukhu and Diphukwe, visited their region. Of this account Mrs. Hepburn wrote saying:

'About this time, corn being very scarce, and Mackenzie not being able to leave his work, my husband decided to go into the Makalaka country to purchase food for the native students and their families.'

She goes on saying:

'We were the first missionaries who had visited these Makalaka. They were subject to Lobengula, the chief of the Matebele, and he ruled over them most tyrannically. We have seen the men bury their guns in the veldt to hide them from the Matebele,

⁴³³. *L.M.S. Annual Reports (Palapye) 1899 and 1900*; B.J. Brown, Secretary of the B.D.C. (Vryburg) March 21, 1898, SOAS: B55 F1 JA.

⁴³⁴. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 1, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JB; also November 18, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JD; H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 4, 1900, SOAS: B52 F2 27/7; Ibid, June 2, 1901, B59 F2 6/7.

⁴³⁵. W.C. Willoughby (Brighton) September 23, 1898, op.cit.

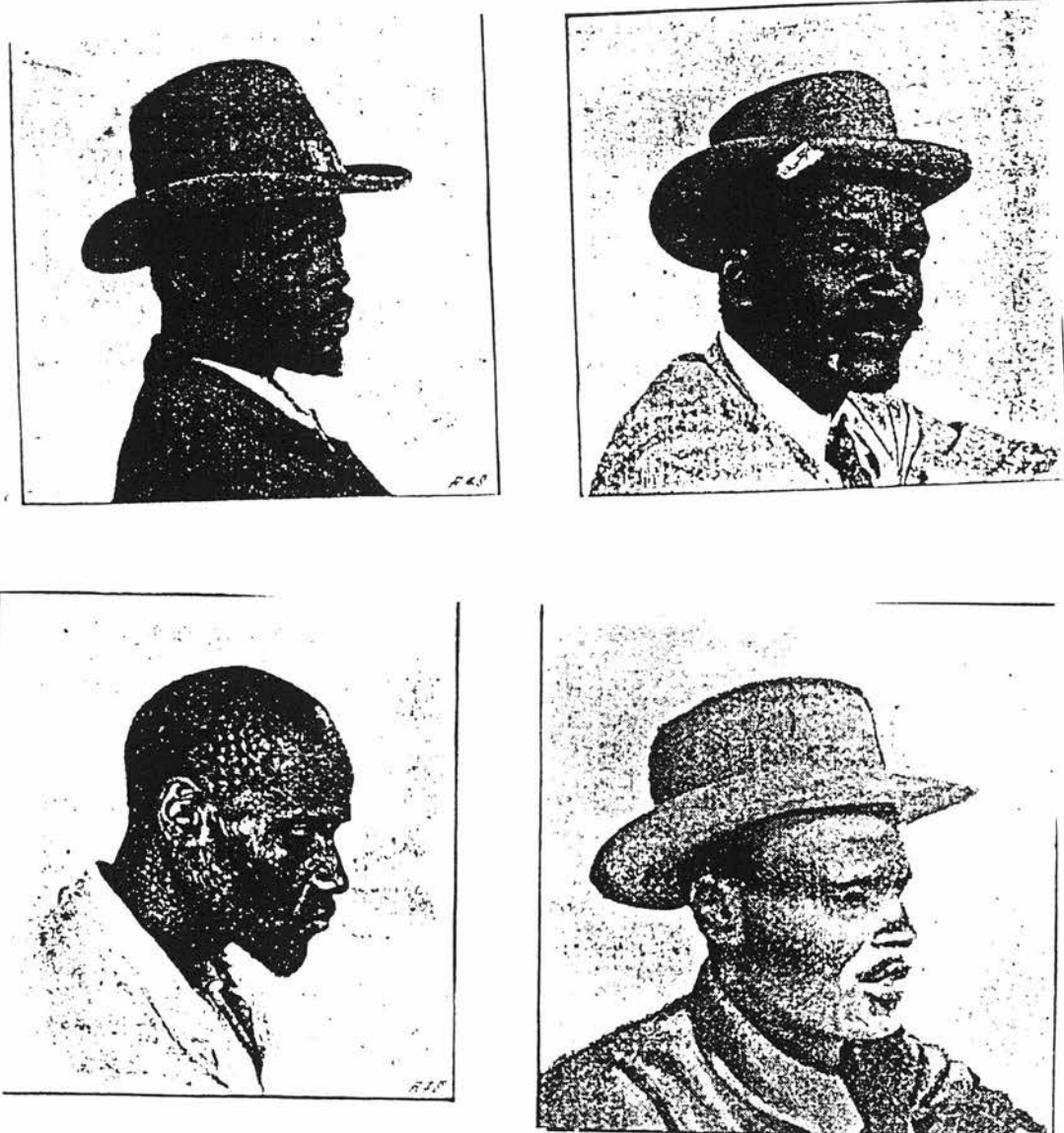


Fig.27

Four of the Ngwato Evangelists, who were sent by Khama and the Ngwato Church to teach Batawana. Note the mode of transport they had to use, across the Kgalagadi semi-arid desert.

(J.D. Hepburn, (1895) p.79.)



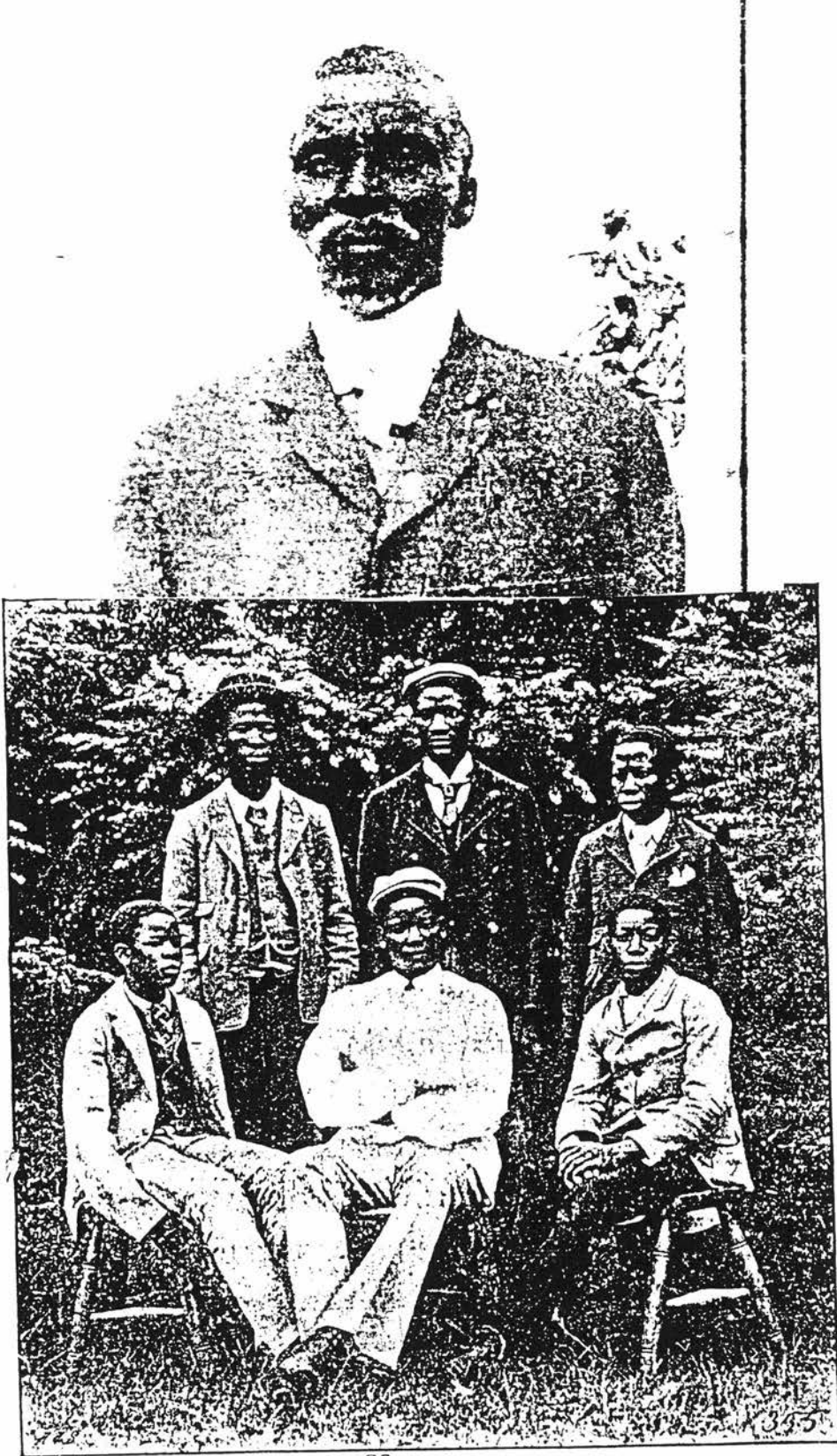


Fig.28

Top: Khukhu Mogodi (top), who with Hepburn and other African evangelists, started missionary work among the BaTswana. He subsequently laboured there for many years.

(T. Tlou, (1984)

Bottom: Some of the BaNgwato boys at school, at Lovedale, in the early 1900s.

(J.D. Hepburn, (1895) p.285)

who periodically would swoop down upon them, robbing and killing, and making slaves of the young people and children.

My husband preached to the Makalaka every Sunday while we were in the country. They understood Setswana, our language.⁴³⁶

The Kalanga were continuously subjected to cattle raids until 1893, by the Ndebele and up to 1899 by the B.S.A.C. police. They were also brought under the Ngwato Hut Tax system by the Colonial Government. Despite this, the Kalanga remarkably took to the Ngwato Christian culture, although they resisted an attempt to be incorporated into the Ngwato political domain and also a mass adoption of western 'civilization'. Their clothing, for instance, was still largely made of softened skins of livestock and game. However, they overwhelmingly responded to elementary education by selling their agricultural produce and using its proceeds for the development of educational facilities for their children. They also cordially welcomed and materially supported the four Ngwato evangelists who visited them in 1901. Concerning this mission, Willoughby wrote saying:

'Our Church here has determined quite in its own initiative to send four teachers into the Makalaka towns along Khama's northern borders and they have agreed to pay them for six months and this is in spite of the fact that our Phalalo is already strained to pay the teachers that we have. These towns have been sending constant requests to Khama for teachers: and there is in the native mind some uncertainty about the political future of communities on that border. But even though the Church decision may be inspired by some percentage of political motive, it still provides us with an opening for the message.'⁴³⁷

Three of the four teachers sent by Khama and the Ngwato Church, into the Kalanga districts, were Motiki Tshokate for Nswazwi; Mmerekhi for Magapatona and Tshube for Nkange. In his capacity as the Ngwato King, Khama had actually given these teachers written orders, instructing the Kalanga people to welcome them and accept their teaching.

4.6. Church Reorganization

When Willoughby first arrived at Palapye, he complained that the Church was disorganized, without any book or past report. He told the Directors that he had to start everything afresh. He also complained that there was lack of order and discipline and a harmful exercise of chiefly power in Church matters. However, he found that an attempt to deny Khama a position in the Church would have created problems, especially as the key deacons were divided on this matter. Of this general disorganization in the Church, Willoughby wrote:

'In the services of the Sunday and that meetings of the week, there was no regularity in assembling. One could never tell to an hour when the people would assemble; and even when one began the service at last, the people continued to arrive till the service

⁴³⁶. Hepburn, J.D., (1895) op.cit., p.10.

⁴³⁷. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 5 & 11, 1901, SOAS: B59 F2 6/7.

was over. This was a sad loss of time to the missionary, who was generally blamed at the same time for keeping people waiting, and for having begun sooner than usual; and it was fatal to the reverence that ought to pervade the service. The chief presented us with a bell. It had to be a big bell, or it would not be heard over the town, which is scattered over a considerable area, and comes nowhere within half a mile of the Church.⁴³⁸

As part of this reorganization, in 1893, Willoughby reduced the numbers of the members on the church roll from more than 800 to 200. Between the years 1896 and 1899 this number had reached 480 on the register. Willoughby stated his objectives as follows:

'I am convinced that here, in the midst of a heathen community, it is desirable to make a clear distinction between the members of the Church and those who are outside.'⁴³⁹

He therefore introduced a series of new codes of discipline and conduct which were as follows:

1). Thorough measures for preparing candidates for Church membership. He did this in two ways - firstly by linking membership to educational ability, especially reading skills. Willoughby therefore saw educational work in the capital and outlying stations as part and parcel of this process. He also believed that his missionary labours would be effectively employed and would lead to spiritual vitality of the Church if the Church membership were able to read and write. Secondly, he did this by attaching Church membership to the financial status of the candidate. This also became a criteria through which diaconate was selected and restricted diaconate to the wealthy members of the Church. Despite this, he successfully enforced the LMS' theoretical aim of developing a self-supporting Church, through what came to be known as the **Phalalo**.⁴⁴⁰ In 1896 a ticket book was opened and registered 441 subscribers. This also became the criteria for admitting members to the Church communion. Failure to pay one's **Phalalo** resulted in suspension from membership. Through this system Church income increased tremendously and reached its amazing record of £98 7s.6d. in 1897, and the level of £111 by 1900. The system, however, disadvantaged the poor, and led to low Church membership in the years 1896 and 1898 because of a decline in infant baptism and Christian marriages. There were, for instance, only 16 marriages celebrated during this period. This decline resulted from the fact that while Hepburn had encouraged most of the BaNgwato to marry and re-marry with Christian rites, Willoughby, on the contrary, discouraged any such practice. In 1898 the latter also denied his deacons the right to conduct marriage sacraments, which had gained popularity and led to an increase in marriages during the days of Hepburn, who had frequently allowed them to conduct such rites. Hepburn had also removed divorce

⁴³⁸. W.C.Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 23,1898, 'Review of Five Years Work at Palapye, 1893-8', SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

⁴³⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October, 1896.

⁴⁴⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 29, 1896, SOAS: B53 F2 JC. This practice subsequently adopted by the other missionaries in other missions and L.M.S. centres in Bechuanaland.

cases from the Church to the royal **Kgotla**.⁴⁴¹

Because of the importance Willoughby attached to literary education, the preparation for Church membership meant that candidates had to take examinations for catechism (baipoledi) classes. This insistence on literacy in the Setswana New Testament, as a pre-requisite for Church membership, created a problem. Those who failed the catechism examinations were not admitted into membership. Willoughby, for instance, told the BaNgwato that a Christian who could not read was like an ox without teeth. This conversation, between Willoughby and a Ngwato deacon, is illuminating:

'But this man is a Christian even if he cannot read. "Yes", I replied, I want to buy an ox, you bring me one, I look into its mouth and decide I will not buy. But you tell me that it is an ox, and I cannot deny. Still I cannot buy; for I see that it has no teeth, and I wonder how long it will continue to be an ox.'⁴⁴²

The metaphor quickly spread throughout the town and was frequently used by Ngwato evangelists. As a means to monitor the reading progress of his catechumen, Willoughby kept a report. Of Mothibe Morwa Mangane from Thabala he, for instance, wrote:

'Baptised in childhood, Catechumen 1889: has read the Bible through, (also Marang, Loeto, Diphokanyana and Korant (sic)). Has been helping his father teach the children of the village. Have met no catechumen so well up in the knowledge of the scriptures. He is a credit to his father who has evidently spared no pains in teaching him. Recommended him without hesitation.'⁴⁴³

What made Willoughby's examination and rules unacceptable was the fact that they did not take into account the problems of the elderly, disabled or the blind. Although the idea of Christians having to be able to read the New Testament for themselves was a good one, the old and incapacitated needed to be exempted from such strict observations. Willoughby himself shows that the system discouraged such people when he wrote:

'Kebabokile Morwadia Mothibedi, ... unbaptized: catechumen 1889; sight has long been bad and reading impossible; knowledge very imperfect, but sincere. Children: 3 alive and 4 dead. recommend with hesitation. Received 372 of 897.'⁴⁴⁴

There were many such catechumen who, due to various special circumstances, took more than eight years to be admitted into Church membership. Again, Willoughby did not consider other various life situations or other social or economic factors contributing to such educational incompetencies. Those who were compelled by pastoral and arable agricultural responsibilities to miss their catechumen classes

⁴⁴¹. Goodall, N., (1954), op.cit., p.289; W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 4, 1900, SOAS: B58; October 12, 1896, S.O.A.S: B53 F3 JB.

⁴⁴². W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 23, 1898, op. cit, pp. 19-20 in Q.N. Parsons, op. cit.

⁴⁴³ W.C.Willoughby (Palapye), September 23, 1898, op.cit., pp.19-20.

⁴⁴⁴. B3 'Notes on Catechumen', form June, 1897, in Parsons, Q.N., (1973) op. cit.

were not given any special consideration. The Christians at the outstations suffered most due to lack of educational facilities.

2). To systematically evangelise the outlying districts. To do this effectively Willoughby divided the town and outlying villages into 37 preaching sectors, which provided 37 preaching stations for exactly 100 preachers. In August 1901, Willoughby had a preachers' class of 50 intelligent men, whom he basically trained in techniques for preparing sermons.⁴⁴⁵ In the same year, Willoughby reported that this led to large congregations and a higher spiritual tone.⁴⁴⁶

Soon after the establishment of this programme, Willoughby, his wife and A.J.Wookey who was on transit to Ngamiland, visited the Tswapong region from August 19 to September, 1896 in order to map out the districts.⁴⁴⁷ Guided by Lesiapetlo, a Palapye deacon familiar with the region, this tour took the missionaries to Sefhare, Chadibe, Maifala, Mokobeng, Ratholo, Moremi's town and Goo-Tau. The presence of Christians in every village and the willingness of chiefs to allow them to conduct services at their **Kgotla** made their mission a success. In the evenings they usually gathered these new Christians around the fires and discussed different subjects of Christianity. This approach was highly appreciated by the people because it fell within their own cultural context.

This approach to evangelism generally led to the growth of Christianity in Khama's territory. This was because the missionary's pastoral duties, which covered an extensive area owing allegiance to Palapye, was now shared between the European missionary and Ngwato evangelists. This made it possible for these Ngwato evangelists to have the mandate to visit very remote areas, which the European missionary could not reach. In doing so, the Ngwato had accepted Christianity to be theirs, and that they had the responsibility to spread it to their own people. Passing leadership responsibility into the hands of local Christians, led to a rapid growth of the Ngwato Church, partly because these evangelists employed traditional methods of communicating their message. This shows that, if Christianity were to gain support from the indigenous Christians it needed to be preached by themselves, in their own language and cultural context.

3). To improve the quality of communion services. As part of this objective, Willoughby conducted an open Sunday service for all the members and adherents alike and once a month conducted communion.

⁴⁴⁵. Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶. *London Missionary Society Annual Report, 1898-9*, pp.178-9 and *Annual Report for 1899-1900*, p.214.

⁴⁴⁷. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., January 18, 1901, SOAS: B59 F1.

The latter which was normally administered at a special service in the afternoon, was done with the common food and drink of the country, and was confined to only enrolled members. Bannocks and water were used to represent bread and wine respectively.⁴⁴⁸ as alcoholic beverage could not enter Khama's Church, Hepburn had previously made wine by pouring hot water over raisins.⁴⁴⁹

Willoughby found that he had difficulties with the usage of only one cup at communion, due to fear of spreading diseases, he abandoned the practice. At first he asked each member to bring their own drinking vessel. This also created a new problem, because it did not encourage uniformity of practice nor did it reinforce the idea of community sharing or family bond, which it was originally meant to represent. It also meant a bizarre list of cups, mugs, ladles, tin lids etc, which meant the deacons had to circulate among the kneeling communicants and pour wine or water into each receptacle. At times there were serious shortages. At last the missionary and the Church elders decided to purchase drinking cups, which are still in possession of the Serowe Congregational Church today.⁴⁵⁰

The procedure of the service was that each communicant had to deposit a numbered communion ticket in the collection plates, during the service, as an indication of presence at the Lord's table. It was also seen as a measure to eliminate non-members or 'unworthy' persons from partaking in the communion. It was therefore only this list of names which was eligible for communion and made up what Willoughby regarded as members of the church. Failure to pay **Phalalo** meant that the member did not receive communion tickets for the following year.

In addition to these objectives and rules, pertaining to the criteria for Church membership, there were other conditions to be fulfilled by all Church members and adherents alike. Deficiencies of character and moral aberrations were barriers to admission. This included such things as criminal offences, as stipulated by the Colonial Court, sexual aberrations as adultery, pregnancy outside marriage, and male

⁴⁴⁸. Although Willoughby often complained of the bad smell of **bojalwa** (traditional beer) during the communion he did not see its drinking as warranting dismissal from Church. Seeing it as a nutritious commodity, he writes saying: 'It is true that the removal of the native beer laws has introduced beer making and drinking among the members, but there has been no case of drunkardness, as far as I can discover.' (W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 16, 1898, SOAS:B55). Excessive drinking of **Kgadi** (intoxicating drink brewed from honey, sugar, syrup etc which could be potent when matured.) J.D.Hepburn (1895) op.cit., p.151: *Annual Report of Palapye*, 1902, pp.255-8; *Chronicle*, No.113, May 1901, p.121.) in 1902 and 1903 resulting from the 1895 withdrawal of the ban, led to many social problems. Khama reinstated the ban for all his subjects and Church members in 1902. (Sillery, I., (1965), op.cit., pp.255-8; *L.M.S. Annual Reports for 1902*, Serowe, pp.3,4.)

⁴⁴⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) 'Notes of Tour in Gwening and Tswapong Hills, August 19 to September 1, 1896.

⁴⁵⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 7, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JA.

cruelty to a partner inside marriage; failure to prevent one's daughter getting pregnant, concubinage, abortion and bigamy. Other unacceptable practices were witchcraft, poisoning, divination, magic, sorcery, and involvement in or consent to circumcision rites. This also included the practice of discovering sickness and misfortune by means of throwing bones (**go phékola**). However some Church members still secretly consulted **dingaka** (African doctors) for the protection of their fields, cattle and homes, while others found Christianity a new source of power and security. Of Mokokotlelo Willoughby, for instance, writes saying:

'Makokotlelo Morwa Mmolai ... catechumen since 1890; can only read very small words, though he has tried since 1891, used to be a medicine man and was particularly well-acquired with roots, herbs, leaves and the go phékola medicines. He was no charlatan but a properly taught doctor who avoided everything but what he was professionally taught. He practised for gain, but when he met Jesus, he decided to give it up entirely, "for vanity". He had to tell many lies and practice much deceit, and would rather live a good life without gain. Fairly well acquainted with the new testament and gave a clear personal testimony. Recommend. Received 362 of 1897.'⁴⁵¹

Christians were also expected to show evidence of sincerity, and penitence, as well as attend Church regularly and send their children to school.⁴⁵²

4. To introduce a number of 'festival' occasions into the life of the Church. Through this fourth objective, Willoughby hoped to instil, into the life of the Church, the principle of self-propagation. The first of these 'festival weekends' was held from Friday 24 to Saturday 25 June, 1897. This occasion brought more than 800 Christians together. The festival was characterized by a prayer meeting, with one or two short addresses from deacons every morning and evening. One of these deacons' theme was 'the one-ness of the Church in heaven and earth.' The rest of the day was given to the examination of the candidates for membership, by Willoughby himself. In the meantime, the rest of the attendants gathered for hymn singing, prayers and testimonies. In the evenings, Willoughby presented Bible stories and incidents from *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress* and *Vanity Fair*. On Sunday morning he preached on the theme 'the privileges and duties of the Church membership'. 'Baptism', which he mentioned as one of these privileges, was administered to a large number of adults, in preparation for the presentation of communion tickets, to welcome 86 people into Church membership during a communion service that afternoon. The Sunday evening meeting was only attended by district Christians. Here, leadership and education were discussed. At the Monday morning service, Willoughby gave addresses on Christian up-bringing of children, after which children were 'baptized' one which was Bontle, Khama's daughter.

⁴⁵¹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., November, 1900, SOAS: 58 F3.

⁴⁵². W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., 'Notes on Church Members, Serowe' from December 21, 1902, B3.

In the last day of the 'festival weekend' another meeting, with representatives of the outlying stations of Gamaletso, Mafala, Ratholo, Moeng and Thabala was held.⁴⁵³

These 'Festival Weekends' became popular annual events. The 1898 festival, for instance, had a huge attendance because of the decision by Khama and Willoughby to combine it with the Harvest Thanksgiving of that year, and took place in the midst of severe drought and rinderpest.⁴⁵⁴

To sum up this section therefore, it must be observed that although literary education is a fundamental factor in the spread of Christianity, to use it as a criteria for Church membership only restricted that privilege to the youthful intelligentsia. It was this generation which enthusiastically pursued education. This, however, supported Khama's agenda of transferring religious and political power from his troublesome brothers to the youthful and educated generation. Willoughby's rules for membership also favoured rich families, because their ability to educate and pay **Phalalo** gained their children many privileges.

4.7. The 'Union Church', Anglicanism and the European Complex

i). Formation of the 'Union Church'

By the 1890s it was evident that the number of Europeans, most of whom were traders, was rapidly increasing. In actual fact Palapye had the largest number of European inhabitants in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. As the number increased, they decided to hold their own English service every Sunday, in the parlour of Mr. A.C.Clark, one of the traders. Although the number of Europeans was about 70 to 80 in 1893, Willoughby, who regularly preached in these English services, reported that the attendance was usually between 3 and 30, depending on sports activities of the day. Cricket matches, shooting games or card parties often drew members away from the meetings.⁴⁵⁵

After sometime, they bought a large African hut, furnished and arranged it and used it for their services.⁴⁵⁶ However, soon afterwards, Willoughby was complaining that it was unpleasantly warm

⁴⁵³. Moeng being the site name of the first Bangwato secondary school built by the community in 1847. See S. M. Gabatswane, (1961), Tshekedi Khama of Bechuanaland, pp.29ff.

⁴⁵⁴. W.C. Willoughby (Brighton), September 23, 1898, op.cit. also see May 28, 1898, B55 F1 JC.

⁴⁵⁵. W.C. Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 23, 1898, 'Review of Five years work at Palapye, 1893-1898', SOAS: B55 F2 JB. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 3, 1893, SOAS: B50 F2 JA.

⁴⁵⁶. See W.C. Willoughby (1900) op.cit., for a photo, pp.58,64.



Fig.29

A trader's home (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS)

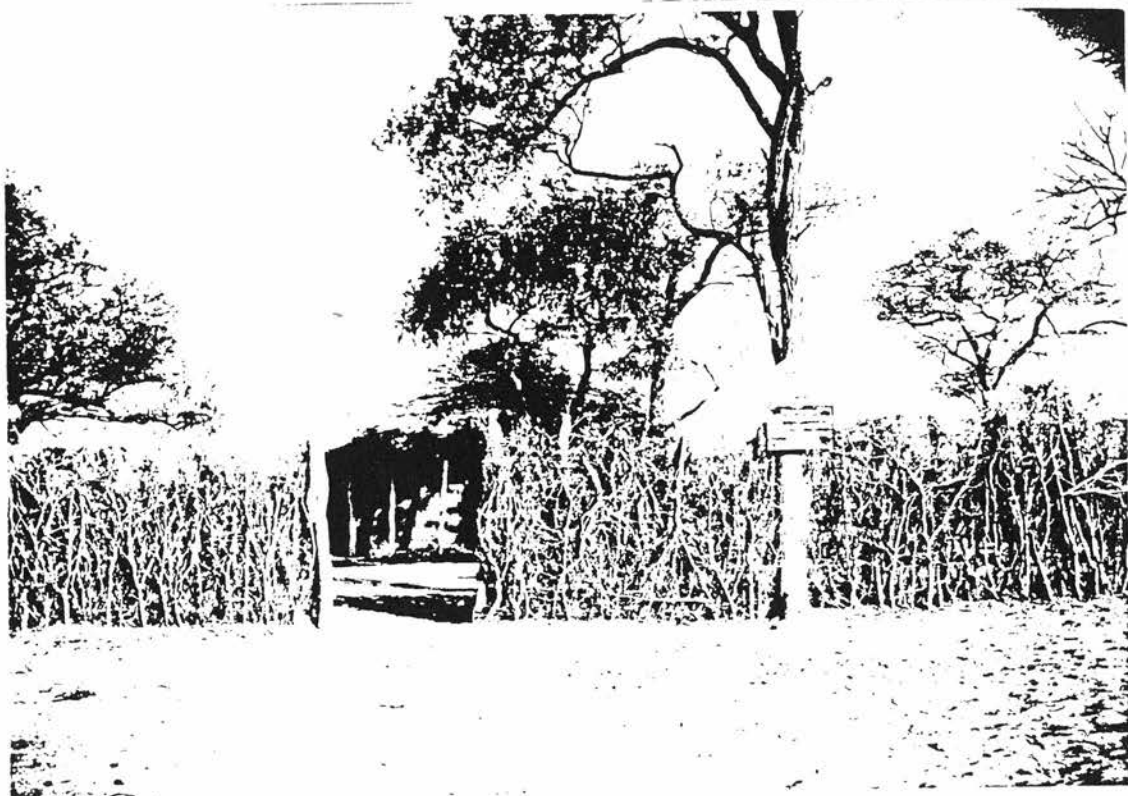


Fig.30

The top picture shows a large African hut, bought and used by Europeans, at Palapye, for their services before building (bottom) a proper and larger church in 1898. This was the first English speaking church in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

for an evening service,⁴⁵⁷ and further wrote: '...we then built ourselves a little Church... on a piece of land that Khama gave us for that purpose.'⁴⁵⁸ This, little European Church came to be commonly known as the 'Union Church' as an expression of its fundamental commitment to an interdenominational fellowship. This new Church building was opened in August 1898 by Rev. D. Burford Hook on his way to Bulawayo.⁴⁵⁹ The formation of such a Church supports the importance of contextualising Christianity so that people may express their faith within the confines of their own culture. Although this allowed the Europeans to conduct services in their own language, and also sing their own songs, it created a problem for LMS because these Europeans came from different denominational upbringings.⁴⁶⁰

ii). Fears of Anglicanism

J.A.Ashburnham, the replacement of John Moffat as the Assistant Commissioner at Palapye, had married one of Roger Price's seven daughters. Unlike most of the LMS missionaries, who were themselves congregationalists, he followed the Anglican persuasion and wanted the Chapel to conform to Anglicanism. Of Ashburnham, Willoughby wrote:

'And he and his wife, who is daughter of Roger Price, broke down on dissent (i.e. L.M.S.) with contempt.'⁴⁶¹

When they (Anglicans) failed to enter the Ngwato territory, through the Palapye European Chapel, they resorted to a mobile mission as a way of penetrating the Tswana heartland. This led to LMS fears in 1896, that the Anglican Church was infiltrating their Tswana mission fields. This complaint did not however deter the Anglicans from carrying out their plans. Between 1897 and 1899, Bishop Gaul, in co-operation with the Rhodesian railway authorities, formed the Anglican Railway Mission, with the aim of primarily ministering to whites in every siding and station along the line of rail between Mafeking and Bulawayo. Willoughby saw this as one of Ashburnham's attempts to replace LMS with Anglicanism.

With Willoughby having gone away on leave in 1898, Howard Williams had come up from Kanye to take his place until 1901. Ashburnham took advantage of this new missionary and tried to assume

⁴⁵⁷. Ibid., p.59.

⁴⁵⁸. Ibid., p.65.

⁴⁵⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 19, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JC; August 14, 1898, B55 F2 JB.

⁴⁶⁰. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 11, 1897 and April 22, 1898, SOAS: B54 F1 JB.

⁴⁶¹. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 18, 1898, SOAS: B55.

'rights' in connection with the usage of the 'Union Church' building. He wanted the Anglican railway Chaplain, Rev. Fogarty, to use it for conducting Anglican services.⁴⁶² This was nevertheless not possible because Howard Williams, the missionary in charge in Willoughby's absence, and Khama, asserted their legal authority with vigour to ensure that this did not come to pass.

It was Khama's policy that there should be only one mission and one Church operating in his state. In 1879, when the Roman Catholic Church first attempted to establish work in Bechuanaland, Khama who was already a member of the LMS, refused them permission to settle in Shoshong because it would cause division among his people. The Catholic missionaries recorded their disappointment in their letters and diaries saying:

'Through an interpreter we repeated our requests of the previous day. He (Khama) asked us many questions about religion, and was amazed that there should be two religions within the same religion. Decidedly, Messrs Sykes and Hepburn had confused the poor King. Finally, Khama told us that he had decided not to receive any more teachers among his people than those already residing there. He added: "If both religions, the Catholic and Protestant, are the same, we obviously only need one of them. If they are different, then there will be constant strife between them and that could cause divisions among my subjects."⁴⁶³

Khama was however basically concerned with the unity of his people under his kingship, rather than religious doctrinal differences.

In 1899 Williams still wrote to the LMS saying:

'Probably Willoughby has told you of the attempts of the Anglican Church to get a footing here. According to the visiting minister of that community, they are to build schools for the children at different centres - Francistown and Phalapye siding and twice he has been inquiring about doing the same here. The idea is to put a layman at these places who shall also hold services. It is an attempt to get on the edge and I feel that in contemptible methods of that kind it is best to meet steel with steel. Hence I have obtained the use of the institute which is the property of the Church and have asked Miss Violet Clark to teach the white children.'⁴⁶⁴

In June 1901, Willoughby still anticipated an impending Anglican bid for the Ngwato field.⁴⁶⁵ The Willoughby/Ashburnham denominational disputes continued until it was settled in London by R.W.

⁴⁶². Ibid. Also see Williams to L.M.S., September 10, 1898; October 3, 1898: SOAS: B55 F2 JB; Willoughby (England) to Williams, November 5, 1898.

⁴⁶³. Charles Croonenbergs, July 24, 1897 on a journey to Gubulawayo quoted in Borschman, D., 'The Conflict between New Religious Movements and the State in the Bechuanaland Protectorate Prior to 1945' thesis, Harvard University 1989, p.64.

⁴⁶⁴. H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 27, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JA.

⁴⁶⁵. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 11, 1901.. SOAS: B58 Ashton to L.M.S., August 8, 1896.

Thompson, foreign secretary of the LMS and Joseph Chamberlain, Her Majesty's Colonial Secretary.⁴⁶⁶

In supporting the LMS monopoly in his state, Khama wanted only one religious body which willingly became part of his government and strengthened his kingly power. Many societies would have provided alternative sources of power to his disgruntled opponents, and thus dividing his people. This is why those in the Church hierarchy, in the form of diaconate, were generally important political leaders themselves. This state of affairs became a vital source of leverage within the state's hierarchy. In 1896 John Brown, of Taung, also attacked Khama for trying to dominate Church affairs.⁴⁶⁷

iii). European Palapye Christians and their views of the BaNgwato

Influenced by their notions of Christianity, commerce and civilization, the European Christians at Palapye regarded the BaNgwato to be socially and politically inferior.⁴⁶⁸ J.S.Moffat, for instance, seeing a close link between Christianity, commerce and civilization, argued that the BaNgwato were backward because of the lack of such things as good markets for trade in skins, and ivory and cattle. Moffat however found that the presence of missionaries brought much benefit to them in terms of commerce and 'civilization'. For Moffat, the presence of these factors led to the absence of 'heathenism' and encouraged cleanliness. He for instance wrote:

'But a man fresh from England who had heard much about the Bamangwato and their chief may even be a little disappointed... it must be supposed that the tribe as a whole has been Christianized... the much larger half... not only take no interest in Christian teaching but would return immediately to the heathen customs if the chief's prohibitions were removed.'⁴⁶⁹

Johnstone, who was a trader at Palapye, had also made strange remarks about the 'heathenism' of the Palapye station. His expectation was that the BaNgwato would completely abandon their way of life and adopt European culture on becoming Christians. Willoughby rejected these remarks when he wrote:

'I can only say that I have seen or heard nothing to lead me to Dr. Johnstone's conclusion. I am afraid that we shall find Manguato (sic) much like all other centres of Bantu population, except that we have more who are trying to live a Christian life and that we have no drink and that the influence of the chief and the Christian people has been strong enough to put down the heathen circumstances, and as I can discover

⁴⁶⁶. B.N.A., H.C., 197/3, Assistant Commissioner to Res. Commissioner, March 17, 1897; Res. Commissioner to Assistant Commissioner, March 11 and 24, 1897.

⁴⁶⁷. John Brown (Taung) to Howard Williams, (Palapye) August 31, 1898; September 10, 1898; November 3, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB; Hepburn, C., (1928) *Jottings by Khama's Friend*, pp.65-6.

⁴⁶⁸. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 21, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1 JB.

⁴⁶⁹. B.N.A., F6 RC 3.7; No.20 'Mr. Moffat's report on Khama's People' February 25, 1895.

the heathen ceremonies are themselves a very fertile source of licentiousness.’⁴⁷⁰

Despite this, Willoughby also believed that Christianity had given birth to the spirit of progress.⁴⁷¹ This was however seen in western terms. He further complained that in Khama lay a mixture of two worlds - progressive and conservative spirit. He for instance wrote to the Directors:

‘For the Directors must not think that Khama is a Progressive chief. When he was a young man he adopted certain progressive ideas, and he held them with wonderful tenacity of purpose. But he appears to stand now just where he stood when he became chief... He is unselfish, and (on some points) more enlightened than his neighbours. But in matters that concern the prerogatives of the chief, there is no more conservative chief in Bechuanaland.’⁴⁷²

Although Khama had, for many years, ruled as a Christian, he remained a committed Ngwato King in his political and religious aims, which were seen as unprogressive by the missionaries. What offended these missionaries most was what Willoughby described as follows:

‘Khama has never been able to draw a sharp line between his position in the state and his position in the Church. And he would undoubtedly like to exercise the same sway. And subject to a qualification already suggested, the chief did dominate the Church. He is a better man than Charlemagne appears to have been; but in the matter that we are discussing, his connection with the Church has been almost as disastrous. As far as I can learn, this Church lags behind every other in the district, in freedom of Church life and independence of character.’⁴⁷³

In his book, *‘Race Problems in Africa’*, Willoughby rejected any idea of social and political equality between the Bantu and the Europeans. His notion of social and political inequality, in fact, affected his interpretations of the BaNgwato and their culture. He however wrote:

‘There are exceptional individuals in both races; Britons who one would be sorry to see in one’s social circle till they were cleaned inside and out, and Bantu whom it is always a pleasure to have at our table.’⁴⁷⁴

Having said this, he went on to argue that Africans could not generally be treated as equals, by Europeans, before they are socially and politically upgraded. It is only after that development, which takes many years, that they could be seen as occupying the same status. He further pointed out that their brotherhood with whites was only on the basis of being ‘children and adolescents’ or ‘younger brothers’ of the British and not on equality. To him, identical professions and status can only be possible if it was

⁴⁷⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 16, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JB.

⁴⁷¹. W.C.Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 2, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

⁴⁷². Ibid.

⁴⁷³. Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴. Willoughby, W.C., (1923), *Race Problems in New Africa*, p.229; also see pp. 159-160.

confined within that arena of Africans being the younger and weaker ones:

'If we could take that ideal into our dealings with blacks, it would crown our strength with patience and gentleness, and we should become redeemers of Africa. But that means keeping very close to the Greater Paternal Heart of the World - or maternal if that is a better metaphor.'⁴⁷⁵

Although Willoughby's commitment to the BaNgwato was in many ways beyond doubt, his belief that they were backward, and slow in learning, is rather unacceptable. His beliefs would only have supported dependence on the British. The idea of 'inequality' in brotherhood is a product of a European or British middle class acceptance of what Africans are.⁴⁷⁶ Willoughby took for granted that Africans can be improved by the adoption of the standards of their 'superiors' the British. These structures are rather irrelevant because social attitudes of different peoples are based on different standards. The adoption of Christianity and literary education by the BaNgwato, did not represent Willoughby's frame of thinking. They rejected any imposition of a European type of Christianity and tried to indigenize it on the basis of their own culture and teachings of Christ.⁴⁷⁷ While they accepted the missionary literary education, they refused to be turned into Englishmen. Their deep love for their centuries' old culture continued as well as was possible.

Willoughby's eurocentric ideals also influenced his understanding of localization. The transfer of political or religious power and leadership, or government, to Africans was expected to take a very long time, since they were not ready for responsibility, the learning process having to be prolonged because of their slowness in learning. This then justified a continuity of dependence upon the colonial administrators, missionaries and traders. This possibly explains why the LMS had itself failed to produce local men and women of sufficient education, experience or integrity, who could cope with the new problems of their own Church and country.⁴⁷⁸ The Colonial Government was equally unwilling to develop anything for the benefit of the people.

That Africans are functionary equals is not something to be elated about. Christianity teaches that we are all children of God and created in His image. The term inequality is in itself altogether inappropriate in a Christian context. To believe that certain races are born unequal to others is inhuman. Willoughby's views do not therefore represent a Christian point of view. His doctrine of 'brothers love and inequality' denies him the right to stand alongside the BaNgwato. Christianity calls for the creation of a sense of

⁴⁷⁵. Ibid., pp.230-231.

⁴⁷⁶. Ibid., p.155.

⁴⁷⁷. See Chapter 3.

⁴⁷⁸. W.C.Willoughby, (1923), op.cit., pp.160-8.

mutual trust and dependence. Willoughby's ideas of brotherhood, based on social and political inequality, opposes genuine Christian leadership. To think that people in tutelage cannot achieve the status of their teacher goes against the very idea of indigenization. It is also untrue to think that democratic processes were zero in Ngwato life. The ideas of the **Kgotla** forums, which encouraged free participation, were fundamental in the life of the Ngwato people. When Khama recognized Christianity, as an important institution of the state and his government, in 1875, he imported into the Church such democratic processes and forums. Subsequently, ecclesiastical and other spiritual grievances were likewise aired and the people were given ample outlets for the expression of opinion. Through the **Kgotla** and Church meetings, Khama had long practised legal equality for both Africans and Europeans alike, before the formation of the protectorate. Khama, together with the kingship and **Kgotla** systems, needed no such gradual development as suggested by Willoughby. In 1876, a group of European traders seemed to share Willoughby's ideas, when they claimed to be above Ngwato law. This attitude angered Khama, who expelled the culprits from his town.⁴⁷⁹ The formation of the protectorate had led to a gradual disappearance of the trial of Europeans at Khama's **Kgotla** and an increase of BaNgwato being tried by Europeans, in serious matters. Tshekedi Khama, the successor and second eldest son of Khama III, like his father had rejected such an infringement of Ngwato law.⁴⁸⁰ In the mid-1920s he, in fact, had to be exiled from Serowe for administering physical punishment to Phineas MacKintosh, a European trader living in Serowe, after his **Kgotla** had sentenced him for infringing with Ngwato laws. The Colonial Administrators wanted to preserve the punishment to the British court, due to the fact that they saw it to be more superior to the local one. Tshekedi challenged them, saying that he, or his father, never asked the British to teach him how to be ruled but how to rule his own people.

In his final chapter of the *'Race Problems in New Africa'*, Willoughby went on to argue that Europeanization of Africa was inevitable. Rather than losing the material advantages of European 'civilization', he advised Africans to abandon their culture. In this process, the missionaries were to be supported by the best European officials and honest traders. However, an African convert was not accepted as an equal in this process, but only advances, to claim his inheritance as a brother-in-Christ, and found that the tenets of the Christian faith are rejected. Willoughby, however, accepted that the pioneer missionaries, such as Livingstone and Moffat, found God already worshipped by the BaTswana. But even here, he saw the African religion developing in stages until it found its only meaning in Christianity. In his analogy, he agreed that missionaries would eventually be replaced by Africans, but the process would require many generations and a great deal of time, to prepare them for the ministry

⁴⁷⁹. Hepburn, J.D., (1895) *Chronicle of the London Missionary Society, L.M.S., London*, September, 1880, pp.1215-9.

⁴⁸⁰. M. Crowder, (1986), *The Flogging of Phineas MacKintosh*.

and leadership. Even then, he did not see any possibility of the evangelization of Africans resulting in a sudden conversion or taking place without European missionaries. Willoughby however made some of the most outstanding contributions to missionary approach, for example, he called for the missionaries to study and understand the peoples' beliefs and institutions, if they were to effectively produce a self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing Church. He also advised against the idea of imposing a European kind of discipline upon indigenous Christians. In his concluding chapter he made very important comments as far as this thesis is concerned. His first point was that what the African Christians thought of their Church should be taken into consideration by European missionaries. In his second point he suggested that two facts would decide the creed, ritual and polity of their Church: i). that it was Christian and African; ii) and that this Church was created out of their own traditions, just as the European Churches were created out of their history, the environment and their own lands and ideals.

The last part of this chapter will briefly discuss some of the contributions made by Willoughby, in the field of education. It will also show some of the conflicting views surrounding education, such as the question of land tenure. Such conflicts were made worse by the growing competition between the LMS and other societies, as well as problems created by rinderpest.

4.8. Effects of Rinderpest

Rinderpest was a cattle epidemic, which ravaged the whole of Southern Africa between 1896-98.⁴⁸¹ Within a short span of time, it had spread widely throughout Bechuanaland and disrupted the whole network of ox-wagon transport, and affected the cattle industry and human life.⁴⁸² Cattle were essential for the sustenance of the peoples' lives: cattle milk products and meat were vital for their diet. People also depended on cattle skin products for such items as sleeping mats, sandals and other forms of clothing. Cattle were also not only important for sacrificial and ritual purposes, but for draught power purposes, especially with the introduction of ox drawn wagons and ploughs. Cattle dung, as well, was useful for domestic purposes such as plastering house walls and floors and as a source of fuel and natural fertilizer for their land and fields. They were also valuable for the sustenance of the **bogadi** system. Cattle were, therefore, not only a source of livelihood, but endowed those who possessed them

⁴⁸¹. Rowe, R., 'A Decade of Destruction: The Great Rinderpest Panzootic of East and Central Africa, 1887-1897' Paper presented to the Symposium on diseases and history in Africa, 1896-7, *Journal of African History*, XIII, 1972, pp.373-88.

⁴⁸². Henning, M.W., (1932), *Animal Diseases in South Africa*, p.411.

with power and status.⁴⁸³ Given this picture, the tragedy caused by the outbreak of rinderpest was immense. A French missionary observer described the tragedy as follows:

'No more cattle, no more milk, what shall we eat? No more cattle, no more fuel, what shall we use for making fire? No more cattle, no more skin clothes, what shall we wear? No more cattle, no more marriages, how shall we marry? No more cattle, no more ploughing, what shall we eat? Where shall we get money?'⁴⁸⁴

Rinderpest had wreaked havoc among the BaNgwato. Khama, who owned three or four thousand head of trained trek oxen, failed to save a sufficient number to make up one span.⁴⁸⁵ In mid-1896, it was estimated that only two or three head of cattle remained alive for every hundred that had existed, at the beginning of the outbreak.⁴⁸⁶ Willoughby estimated cattle losses at 90 to 96 per cent, that is a loss of about 900,000 head of cattle.⁴⁸⁷ He thus wrote:

'I do not think any member of Church has a span of trek oxen left; and I doubt whether we could make up two spans between us. Neither Khama nor Sekgome possess a single trek ox... All government oxen are dead... It is said that there is about £25,000 worth of stuff on the road between here and Mafeking.. Many transport riders are said to have simply abandoned their stuff, and gone into the Transvaal. It is hard to see what the end of it will be. But apparently bankruptcy for many whites, and starvation for many blacks. The natives have still cattle at some cattle posts; but whenever the rinderpest has got to a post, it has simply cleaned it out.'⁴⁸⁸

The effects of this upon the mission and the people were great. With the traders taking advantage and profiting out of the situation, prices soared up to ten times the normal rates. With a serious shortage of food items, the price of maize mealies and sorghum (brown corn), for instance, rose from £1 to £5 a bag.⁴⁸⁹ Due to these exorbitant prices and hardships, Willoughby said that:

'Women dig the roots of the Motlhopi tree, bake them, pound them in a mortar, boil them, allowing fermentation to begin, and drink the mixture, which is of the consistency of thin pea soup.'⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸³. See Chapter 6 for details.

⁴⁸⁴. Pule Phoofolo, 'Epidemics and Revolutions: The Rinderpest Epidemic in Late Nineteenth - Century Southern Africa', in *Past and Present a Journal of historical Studies*, February, 1993, No.138, p.118.

⁴⁸⁵. Annual Report of Assistant Commissioner, Palapye, 1897 in *Past and Present a Journal of Historical Studies*, op.cit., p.125.

⁴⁸⁶. J.Wookey (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 20, 1896, SOAS: B53; H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 5, 1896, SOAS: B53; Sillery, I., (1974), Botswana: A Short Political History, pp.115,139.

⁴⁸⁷. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 30, 1896, SOAS: B56 F1 JD.

⁴⁸⁸. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 21, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1 JD.

⁴⁸⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Brighton) September 23, 1898, op.cit.

⁴⁹⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 19 to September 1, 1896, op.cit., pp.7-8.

Willoughby saw this severe situation as a blessing in disguise. He wrote:

'Now as to the effect of this rinderpest upon our work. It will help us in many ways. The children have been kept from school to herd the cattle at the posts; the whole cattle post system has been alien to our work. The life lived at the posts is far from what it ought to be. And the posts have been a break in all their learning, as well as an influence of an alien order. The industry of the people will probably be stimulated now that the learning of money by labour must be looked to supply their wants, instead of the gain from their cattle.'⁴⁹¹

As the above quotation shows, missionaries saw the disaster to be some form of punishment on the BaNgwato and called them to repentance. But these recipients of the missionary teaching refused to rely solely on such religious explanations.

Later, when Willoughby organized relief work from England, Khama angrily refused to accept such charity and preferred rather to send firewood to Kimberly for six months, to buy food for his people.⁴⁹² This refusal, to accept aid, was fuelled by the fact that Willoughby hailed the impending devastation as a God sent punishment, due to the peoples' rejection of Christianity. He termed it a lesson to force, or teach, people to turn to God. Willoughby, had before this, refused to organise charity saying:

'...by the sweat of your brow shall you live. God never made a lazier set than the Bechuanas... and if this hard year will compel some of them to work, it will be good... they are the laziest set on the earth, especially the men.'⁴⁹³

He believed that it was a timely lesson, that the rinderpest had been sent to administer. Khama therefore also refused to accept money from the British colonial government. Each time they gave him returns from the Hut Tax, he passed the money to the missionaries.⁴⁹⁴ Khama refused to accept such assistance because, he said, both the missionaries and the colonial administrators were at times more concerned with money than with his people. He also found that charitable help, or aid, tied his people to foreign resources and political power, which he abhorred. Considering the fact that his people were seriously suffering from drought, the decision to refuse such an assistance, was a firm one. Khama saw such aid programmes having serious implications for his kingly authority and the independence of his people. He feared that if a foreign power had too much influence over his people, it might weaken his own authority and through this, they might also lose the ability to make their own life together, and to also promote community life, which was at the centre of their lives.

⁴⁹¹. Same as 485.

⁴⁹². W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S.: SOAS: B53 F1 JD, April 21; June 29, 1896; B53 F2 JC; October 4, 1896 (Kimberly) B53 F3 JB.

⁴⁹³. Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴. W.C.Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 23, 1898, op.cit.

A prominent deacon and evangelist, Baruti Kalayakgosi, who had followed Sekgoma in 1899, also complained that the credibility of Christianity was at stake, because Church members were prospering at the expense of the poor. He wrote to Willoughby saying:

'The people have lost confidence in the Church. They see Christians as cheats, hypocrites, and murderers. They say we ask for money and clothes and food at the expense of the heathens (bahaitane) and I feel very much ashamed. I pray that God may give you the wisdom to solve these problems.'⁴⁹⁵

But even under these difficult times, Khama did his best to help the missionaries with cattle for their journey.⁴⁹⁶

4.9. Questions of Land Ownership

The question of who controlled and owned the land, and the waters flowing through Ngwatoland, was a sensitive one. The Ngwato law stated that the final authority in land matters rested with the community. Individuals had the right to use, and take, the fruits of the land which they were working, and could dispose of the land freely, but no one had the right to sell or buy.

Among the key factors affecting land tenure was religion. Religion greatly influenced people's attitude towards the land, and many would, for instance, cling to exhausted soil because their ancestors lay buried there. The ancestors were commonly regarded as the real owners of the land.

Geographic and physical events, affecting social and economic life, such as drought or weather in general, were therefore dominated by religious interpretation. Such situations, events and experiences did not just happen without any supernatural cause. Similarly, land was eventually seen as a property of the **badimo** (ancestors). The ground was not only seen as their home, but also as an essential communal resource. Land held all the viable and vital resources of the society, such as water, minerals, plants and edible foods. It was to be held in community and passed from one generation to the next.

When Khama's town moved to Palapye in 1889, both the Colonial Government and the missionaries began to challenge the Ngwato law on land ownership. It all started when Khama set aside a small piece of land in the Kloof for a mission garden and fenced it for them. When Hepburn left in 1892, John Moffat took it over and cultivated vegetables. Moffat and Willoughby, due to their connections with the LMS, were good friends and frequently turned to each other for help. Willoughby was grateful

⁴⁹⁵. Baruti Kalayakgosi (Palapye) to Willoughby, November 22, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1.

⁴⁹⁶. A.J.Wookey (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 18, 1896, SOAS: B53 F3 JB.

for Moffat's help and counsel during his early days at Palapye. However, when Moffat was replaced⁴⁹⁷ by J.A.Ashburnham, as Assistant Commissioner, an open conflict, over the ownership of the water springs and the garden between the latter and the missionary, broke out.⁴⁹⁸ Willoughby had developed the garden, cut a road to the waterfall, dug wells and installed a pump, planted fruit trees, dug a furrow and fenced and made a gateway to keep the water pure, and to stop animals destroying the wells.⁴⁹⁹ Realizing that the mission had, for a long time, claimed some unspecified form of land tenure over the land surrounding the water springs and gardens, Willoughby wrote to the Directors saying:

'The time has evidently come when some position must be taken by the Society on the subject of its right to the property that we occupy at Palapye. The whole subject is unpleasant to me, but it is my duty to lay it before the Directors... as far as I know the Society has no papers to show that it is any way entitled to the grounds on which its property stands, or to the gardens, wells, etc... But as far as I know the case of the Bamanwato means simply the will of the chief.'⁵⁰⁰

In the same letter, Willoughby further expressed his fears, saying:

'I fear we are marked by some in authority here as people to be punished for thwarting the company in the interests of the chiefs.'⁵⁰¹

Convinced that Khama would grant such a title of ownership, he applied for a trust deed, which would ensure the security of tenure but instead got a 'deed of grant'.⁵⁰² Khama made a clear distinction between the two and was against any form of land privatization.⁵⁰³ The 'Deed of grant' clearly stated that the land would revert to the community, whenever the agents of the LMS ceased to need it for the purposes it had been procured for. In a letter accompanying this document, Khama told Willoughby that he detested all forms of legal documents, especially those dealing with land, saying:

'When I read the letter you have written to me, I found one painful word in it, which is this, when I speak to you I must write my words on paper. I have long lived with missionaries from a long time ago. I lived with Mr. John Mackenzie. I lived with Mr. Hepburn. And I placed them on the Shoshong River always speaking with them by word of mouth. They never at any time asked me to put my words on paper. Neither

⁴⁹⁷. Moffat's support for the Raditladi faction had prompted his replacement.

⁴⁹⁸. J.A.Ashburnham (Palapye) to L.M.S., February 11, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JB.

⁴⁹⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to Khama, February 17, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JB.

⁵⁰⁰. Ibid.

⁵⁰¹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 3, 1897, SOAS: B54.

⁵⁰². Khama (Palapye) to Willoughby, February 18, and 20, 1897; Willoughby to Resident Commissioner, March 10, 1897, B54.

⁵⁰³. Khama (Palapye) to Willoughby, February 22, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JB.

have we ever heard such words at any time. And now ourselves we are afraid lest it being the missionary on one side and on the other the magistrate, they being the chief men to whom we go to speak about anything that gives us trouble, they are doing this. I write because you said I must write. But I am afraid; for I do not know the thing which you will do afterwards. Speaking as you are now about this river, is it now that it is being taken? I do not know... I have ceased to write. I shall look forward only to what will be done.⁵⁰⁴

Willoughby had also written an official letter to J.A.Ashburnham along with a copy to both the Resident Commissioner and High Commissioner, concerning the missionaries' right to a water spring at the Kloof and a garden at the back of the mission house.⁵⁰⁵ While this haggle, between the magistrate and the LMS, was finally settled in London by the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain and the LMS foreign secretary, W.R.Thompson, the land issue at Palapye remained sensitive for many years.

4.10. Education at Palapye

The idea of educational specialization was, not entirely new to the BaNgwato. John MacKenzie had, in 1871, remarked that a Tswana King had a 'class' of **dingaka**, who did not only practise the art of healing but were also professors of rain-making.⁵⁰⁶ But, the establishment of a state-Church in 1875 meant that the benefits of formal education and Christianity, became synonymous. This led to a conflict between the old and new types of education, symbolized by the April 1865 boycott of the **bogwera** school of the Maemelwa regiment, by Christians.⁵⁰⁷ The attendance at mission school, by the youth and nobles, symbolized support of the Khama faction and the basis of the formation and growth of the state-Church membership. Right from the beginning, we have seen that both the Church and school were largely financed and staffed by the BaNgwato, with the nominal supervision of the resident missionary. J.D.Hepburn actually saw the school and Church systems running concurrently and being extended by himself and the Ngwato teachers and evangelists. The ideal of the development of Christian elementary schooling went hand in hand with the Ngwato state, from the centre, to the periphery. The example of the establishment of the Ngamiland Mission in 1887 is typical. The Shoshong Church had despatched four evangelists to Ngamiland, to give the BaTawana the new education, Christianity and commerce. The Church and Khama actually gave Gogakgosi (sic., possibly Oakotse), Kuato (sic., possibly Kgato or Kgati), Motlhapise and Rampodu coffee, tea, sugar, candles, soap, books and Bibles

⁵⁰⁴. Khama (Palapye) to Willoughby, February 22, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JB.

⁵⁰⁵. Willoughby (Palapye) to Ashburnham, March 11, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JB; to the Resident Commissioner via Assistant Commissioner, March 10, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1.

⁵⁰⁶. Mackenzie, J., (1871), op.cit., p.381, Also see Chapters One and Two.

⁵⁰⁷. Ibid., pp.397-8.

to take to Ngamiland.⁵⁰⁸ For the missionaries, the mission also meant civilization, education and Christianity.

In 1882 outposts of Shoshong had two **baruti** (teachers),⁵⁰⁹ who were 'Soldate' (sic., Solotate) in Kgalagadi and Tsapo in the Tswapong region). In Shoshong, itself, there were seven elementary schools then.

When the Ngwato moved to Palapye in 1889, nine or ten ward elementary schools taught literacy and scripture. In 1889, 400 or 500 school children competed in learning the whole of the Gospel of John by heart, in Setswana. The winners were given prizes of scriptural texts on Sekgoma's wedding day.⁵¹⁰

The only private school in Palapye was kept by Simeon Ratshosa, Sekgoma's friend. This school was situated outside the **Kgotla** with no school building. When Alice Young was appointed as schoolmistress at Palapye in 1893, the nine to ten ward schools were fused into a central elementary school, under her charge.⁵¹¹ Young's educational work, successfully developed because her methods and approaches, appealed to both the BaNgwato children and parents. Khama's remarkable support for this venture was another contributing factor to this success. His reign and royal legislation had given literary education an official status. This was not a new practice, because culturally, education was part of the responsibility of the state. In his kingly power, Khama encouraged the BaNgwato to send their children to both public and Church schools, where he himself had briefly taught in the early days.⁵¹²

The school as a national institution and its teachers were accountable to the King, it's overseer and supporter in both political and financial terms. Within three months of Miss Young's arrival, preparations for the school building were in progress. In his chiefly power, Khama had initiated the project himself and used state resources: money, and regimental labour. Within nine months the

⁵⁰⁸. Hepburn, J.D., (1895), op.cit., pp.181-2.

⁵⁰⁹. This refers to a teacher who could teach literary education and preach in the Church.

⁵¹⁰. Parsons (1973) op.cit., pp.237-83; Quoting P. Mathers (1891) *Zambezia: England's Eldorado in Africa*.

⁵¹¹. Burns, J.H.L.,(1962) op.cit., p.11; A.Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 28, 1896, SOAS. B53 F2 JA; Ibid., June 13, 1896, B54 F4. See Chapter Seven for details.

⁵¹². Goodall, N.,(1945) op.cit., p.285; Also Chapter Seven.

buildings had been completed and were ready for use.⁵¹³ They were officially opened on November 19, 1894, by Khama (laying the topping out stone) marking the connection between chiefly power and education. The Assistant Commissioner spoke of the value of education.⁵¹⁴ The project which consisted of four class rooms, designed for 300 pupils, had been completed for £578. The BaNgwato further donated five black boards, sewing tables and books for the use of the 150 scholars and seven teachers.⁵¹⁵

Khama had deliberately set the school near the **Kgotla**, which Willoughby suspiciously co-operated with, to avoid opening old wounds. This was however consistent with the cultural practice, which, while accepting that religion transcended everything else, it was closely interlinked with the political matters. Religion, education and politics were seen as part of the same struggle. In 1901, Howard Williams, likewise, expected preaching and the Sunday school boom to accompany progress in elementary education.⁵¹⁶ During the Boer War in 1899, Khama permitted the soldiers to use the Church and school buildings for a fort. These Church meetings, which met at the **Kgotla** became very popular; in fact they attracted up to 10,000 at ploughing seasons.

J.S.Moffat's critical views, on the Society's education, had not changed since 1877. Although he was now a government official, he repeated his old call that the Society needed to improve its education in Bechuanaland. He had, like the BaNgwato, suggested that two missionaries be sent to Palapye, to take charge of the educational work. This led to the appointments of Miss Alice Young and Miss Hargreaves in 1893. Moffat wanted to see more life being put into the local schools, in order to lay a firm foundation in the elementary education rather than rush into a theological college all at once. He wanted to see this, and the preparation of village teachers and good day schools in every LMS station before spending monies in new directions. He also wanted these stations to each have two good, single female missionary teachers and for the Moffat Institution, which was at one point located at Shoshong (1872-1876) and then moved to Kudumane in 1876, to move northwards. The centre of gravity for Tswana Christianity was obviously, no longer Kudumane but, the Bechuanaland Protectorate in general and specifically Palapye. That the Europeans were all rushing northwards, strengthened his

⁵¹³. A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B54 F1 JC.

⁵¹⁴. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 21, 1894: SOAS: B5 F1 JD.

⁵¹⁵. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., November 19, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JC; A.Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 23, 1896, SOAS: B53.

⁵¹⁶. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 22, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JB.

argument.⁵¹⁷

The LMS Directors held the belief that the BaTswana did not care for education, which was not really true, because many Ngwato parents were struggling to pay £20 annually to Lovedale, a Free Church of Scotland Institute in South Africa. Khama himself was investing a lot of money, as an attempt to develop education. The problem was, in fact, with the Society's education itself. The position it held in Southern Africa, educationally was not an admirable one. The Kudumane Moffat Institute was not making any useful or creative impact. With the failure at Kudumane, Palapye was probably the best replacement, as far as the location was concerned.⁵¹⁸ Willoughby was himself aware of this and thus wrote saying:

'Your remark that in the future our Training Institution will have to be in Northern Bechuanaland, gives me more pleasure than you dreamt - when you wrote it. I am laying a broad foundation here in the full belief that it will be built on.'⁵¹⁹

In his proposal for such an establishment, in February 1898, he stated that it would comprise of an elementary boarding school for boys with a technical and industrial department, to provide instruction in the use of tools and apprenticeships in trades such as smithing, carpentry, artisan and building. He said that if the school were to be in Palapye - it would need a doctor, a mechanic, a boarding master and a gardener, all of whom were to be paid by the BaNgwato. He further argued that a better education in Palapye, would be an extra inducement for the Ngwato scholars at Lovedale, and also that the coming railway would provide scope for excellent future development and growth.⁵²⁰

Like J.S.Moffat, Willoughby was very critical of the work of the former missionaries and the general past record of the Society in that field. He wanted it to be improved to meet the same standards as the Lovedale and Basotho Institutes:

'I believe in congregationalism, as a system of Church government. But I do not believe that it is for the organization of an army. The head of the school must be its head and not merely the colleague of a number of teachers. And the committee must not interfere with him any more than is absolutely necessary. Under him there should be a qualified teacher of elementary school subjects; a teacher of gardening; and later on, other teachers.'⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷. J.S.Moffat (Palapye) to L.M.S., May, 1892, SOAS: B49 F2 JB.

⁵¹⁸. A.Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JC.

⁵¹⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 22, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JB; Ibid., March 21, 1898, B55 F1 JC.

⁵²⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., November 19, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JC; March 18, 1895, B52 F1 JB (Cape Town).

⁵²¹. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 21, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1 JD.

Such a school, Willoughby suggested, should be built in a part of the country where there was a good supply of drinking and irrigating water. All the teaching was to be given in English. There was to be no definite department for the training of evangelists. Any scholar who proved to be fit for missionary work, was later to be given a year or two of special training, with a view to employing him later. He however stressed that:

'The... new school should be well equipped with tools; and that the tools should belong to the school, not to the particular teachers whose duty it might be to teach the scholars how to use them. Some might then return home with a few tools,...'⁵²²

Thompson was also aware of the inadequacy of the LMS educational facilities in Bechuanaland.⁵²³ He therefore remarked that the future of the LMS Training Institution should be concentrated in Northern Bechuanaland. Willoughby took this seriously and began to establish a firm foundation at Palapye, believing that the newly planned railway, crossing Khama's territory, would be a boost to their development. When such an institution was discussed, during the 1895 London talks, the Tswana Kings were favourable to the idea. However, Thompson noted that Khama, specifically wanted the institution established in his own territory because of his unwillingness to send his boys into the territory of Kings who had not put down heathen customs.⁵²⁴ The final decision to close the Kudumane Institution was made in 1897 due to rinderpest and the Boer revolt, together with James Richardson's Report (1889) on LMS education in Bechuanaland which stated that the majority were in favour of Khama's territory, for a site.⁵²⁵ In 1896 Roger Price, however, argued that, although Khama's rule was 'enlightened', the idea of establishing an institution, where 'native' ideas predominated was unwelcome. He suggested the Gaborone area, because he thought it would be a suitable site for an 'English township'.⁵²⁶ While Price agreed with T.J.Brown of Taung and Willoughby, that this was to be an industrial institution, with carpentry and blacksmithing etc, he disagreed with Brown who was against the idea of an English medium system of education, proposed by Price. In February 1896, Brown also wanted to see Congregationals exerting their superiority and influence and thus crushing chiefly involvement, in both educational and Church affairs. He specifically demanded that, if Palapye or any other site in Khama's territory was to be chosen, Khama had to first issue a title deed to the Society and also promise to

⁵²². Ibid.

⁵²³. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., September 22, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JB.

⁵²⁴. W.R.Thompson (London) to H.Williams, 'Annual Report, 1895-6, p.12, cited in Q.N. Parsons (1973), p.254.

⁵²⁵. J.Richardson (Vryburg) to L.M.S., September 25, 1899, SOAS: B51 F3 JB. Also see July 19, September 14, 1898 reports.

⁵²⁶. R.Price (Molepolole) to L.M.S., January 10, 1896, SOAS: B53.

relinquish his chiefly power or control over the buildings.⁵²⁷ At the end of 1896 this resulted in a huge **Kgotla** meeting, where the Ngwato discussed the proposed institution. Although they suggested two possible sites outside Palapye; one at Phata-ea-Manong⁵²⁸ and another at Seleka village, Willoughby, assisted by A.J.Wookey, who was on his way to Ngamiland, after surveying them, found that they were too remote from the planned railway.⁵²⁹ While the missionaries wanted an 'English town' along the railway, the BaNgwato were increasingly becoming more critical of their intentions. Having met in May 1897, the B.D.C. resolved to search for another site, which led to the purchasing of a piece of land from a Boer near Vryburg, in the Northern Cape Colony in 1898, for £1,190.50. In response, the BaNgwato refused to send their children to Tiger Kloof, the new institution, named after its railway siding, which began to operate in 1901 under the principalship of James Richardson. They preferred instead to send six of their promising pupils, an ex-teacher and other scholars, to either the Lovedale or the French Basotholand Institute.⁵³⁰ When Tiger Kloof was raided and destroyed in November 1901, Willoughby still pressed for Palapye as an option. With Khama's planned move to Serowe, it was hoped that the massive stone Church building at Palapye would be used as a focal point for the institution.⁵³¹

On May 24, 1902, the B.D.C. meeting held at Palapye, the missionaries implored the Ngwato **Kgotla** to agree to selling, rather than lending, the Church buildings at Palapye for the purposes of such an institution.⁵³² Khama categorically stated that the land and its water supplies and buildings were neither for sale nor for giving away. He further stated that the mission work could continue to be carried out in them without any hindrance, for as long as the Society wanted. Despite this offer, the Assistant Commissioner, who was in favour of the Tiger Kloof, promised large financial aid from the Hut Tax revenue, for the re-establishment of the school there.⁵³³ Although Willoughby was still determined to press for the Palapye option, his obsession with land tenure estranged Khama. He wanted land to be officially passed to the LMS and told Khama that he was unwilling to build more stone houses, without some form of guarantee of tenure. But Khama refused to allow land to pass out of the

⁵²⁷. J.T.Brown (Taung) to L.M.S., February 29, 1896, SOAS: B53.

⁵²⁸ One of the prettiest Kloofs, 16 miles from Palapye.

⁵²⁹. Ashton (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 8, 1896; Wookey (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 24, 1896; Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., January 8, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JA.

⁵³⁰. J.T.Brown (Taung) to L.M.S., April 19, 1898, SOAS: B55 F1 JA.

⁵³¹. Parsons, Q.N., (1973) op.cit., p.257; Willoughby, March 26, 1898, SOAS: B55 F1 JA.

⁵³². W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October 30, 1901; E. Sharp (Palapye) August 14, 1901; Richardson, November 30, 1901; March 13, July 23, 1902, SOAS: B58 and 59.

⁵³³. E. Sharp (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 14, 1901, SOAS: B58.

community. When, in 1902, Willoughby officially refused an offer for the free usage of the Church buildings, the conflict intensified and led to more than 13 years of semi-overt strife. Khama went to the extent of seeking legal advice, from the new Assistant Commissioner, Joseph Panzera, to keep the power of controlling land within the community. Willoughby expressed a mixture of bitterness and fear, saying:

'One never expects gratitude from native... I never beg from the King... But the main feeling I have just now is one of fear that Khama will one day break from the Church; and that nearly all the deacons and members will readily sacrifice everything to what they take to be his whim.'⁵³⁴

In his 1906 classic Report on education in Bechuanaland, E.B.Sargent explained the failure in negotiations, between the BaNgwato and LMS, as stemming from Khama's Ethiopian attitudes and influence.⁵³⁵ Although there is no evidence that Khama was either intending to break from the LMS, or that he had Ethiopian attitudes, it is obvious that his relations with the LMS were at their worst. When the B.D.C. met at Palapye in 1902, for instance, Khama did not offer the usual diplomatic hospitality. Although he sent his wife to give his diplomatic apology, he also decided to absent himself to Serowe on the Sunday that the committee had arranged a church festival.

4.11. Summary

This chapter has observed that the Ngwato Church had a great capacity to adopt cultural approaches and methods in terms of finance, ideas and personnel. These local resources were increasingly coming to the centre stage of the Ngwato Christianity, especially that foreign resources in terms of quantity and ability failed to meet the daily needs of people, partly because of their foreignness. It was becoming evident that certain matters were left to the decision of the local church leaders, they would have been handled in a different way. The most important achievement of the Ngwato church during this period was the fact that it established itself into a self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating organization, outreaching across its territorial borders. Unfortunately, the development of the educational standards were not adequate to equip the local evangelists and ministers.

On the political front, the mission's own attitude and perception of its role within the colonial state and its expectation of the state was marked by a constant changing relationship. Khama's own relationship with both the mission and the colonial state was very interesting. He retained a great deal respect in the eyes of his subjects, European traders, missionaries, and colonial officials. They all generally regarded him to be a progressive Christian ruler, although his interference in church matters distressed

⁵³⁴. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 9, 1902, SOAS: B59.

⁵³⁵. Sargent 1906 Report, p.38.

missionaries. It was this image which became an asset in 1895, when the Tswana kings visited England to oppose incorporation of their country into the B.S.A.C.'s territory. His personality as an upright Christian ruler became a successful diplomatic means. The 1895 London talks as we have observed introduced another aspect of the LMS involvement in politics. The examination of this interaction between the colonial authorities and the LMS has been explained by one overall structural factor - that while LMS had a monopoly - like position in the colonial state and acted as the only institution besides the government with an organizational structure that covered the whole Bechuanaland Protectorate. This brought the LMS into some form of competition with the political sphere. This was more so because through its newspapers, the LMS often challenged the policy of the colonial administrators. This together with the fact that it had its own educational system and that its missionaries acted as advisers of the Tswana kings in external affairs was interpreted as a source of political power. In 1895, for instance, the colonial Government like the B.S.A.C. openly challenged its alliance with leading Tswana kings. Willoughby's political activities were particularly seen as a threat to both the colonial political system and intentions of the B.S.A.C. in Southern Africa as a whole. It was possibly for this reason that the colonial administrators at Palapye during this period tried to weaken the LMS monopoly, which had given it a strong position by encouraging the activities of the Anglican Church in Bechuanaland.

This period (1889-1902) ended when the issues of non-alienation of land, status of the LMS education and the missionary suspicion that Ethiopian attitudes influenced the BaNgwato, dominating the conflicts between the mission and the Ngwato Church. The relationship between the two deteriorated when Khama using his traditional kingly power made a close connection between land ownership and educational work. He saw all these matters belonging to the same political category. However, the missionaries wanted land matters to be under a foreign system of authority, distinct and independent from the administrative system of King Khama.

It was under this atmosphere that Khama decided to move his capital to Serowe. The BaNgwato had apparently moved from Shoshong due to water shortages and they were now facing the same contingency, which forced them to move to their ancient town of Serowe.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0. Serowe Church, 1902-1923

5.1. Introduction

During the years 1902 to 1923 the BaNgwato continued to search for ways of developing a more contextualized Christianity in the Ngwato setting. This was met with opposition originating from both the political, economic and religious spheres.

The economic activities of European traders like the political activities of the colonial Government seemed to undermine the ability of the BaNgwato to play a vital part in developing a self-supporting and self-governing church.

Although the LMS wanted the mission to influence the shaping of the government policy, this period shows that it was the religious policy of the colonial Government which actually influenced certain policies of the LMS mission. The co-operation of the colonial Government and the missions on such matters as those dealing with marriage laws in the Protectorate goes to prove this.

The other major issues discussed in this chapter are the conflicts which arose from the spread of Ethiopianism, educational matters and the very sensitive question of the South African Union.

5.2. The Geography of Serowe

Physical and cultural considerations appear to have influenced the selection of Serowe as a new Ngwato capital. The water sources were comparatively good. The vastness of the fertile soil provided adequate grazing grounds for their livestock and for arable purposes. Willoughby described the new site as follows:

'Serowe itself is about 175ft. high-hand close-grained grey sandstone....The principal water rises about three miles west of the town and flows past the town on its northern side.... Between the hill and this stream the ground is quite as sandy as that at Phalapye and so for five or six miles beyond the stream to the north. But from every other direction from Serowe fine grazing and garden grounds stretch away for a considerable distance.... North of Serowe there are seven permanent streams within sixteen miles. All this means garden grounds near home and cattle posts within easy reach.'⁵³⁶

⁵³⁶. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October 30, 1902: SOAS: B59.

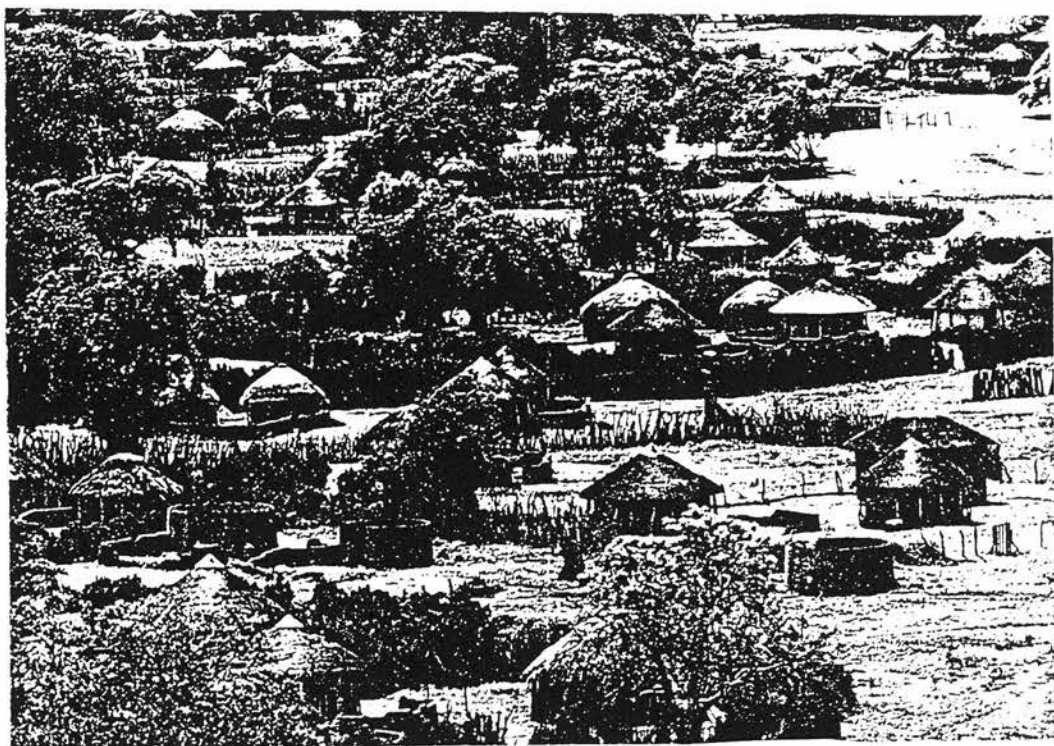


Fig.31

Serowe, Khama's third capital, with its traditional homes (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS; Kutlwano).

Serowe was also an ancient town of immense historical, cultural and religious significance.⁵³⁷ This was Kgari's (Sekgoma's father) capital before the BaNgwato moved to Shoshong. Removal to this new town of Serowe commenced in July 1902; with Khama, once again, paying for the entire cost of transporting both the public and mission property over the 44 km distance, north west of Palapye.⁵³⁸

5.3. Early Difficulties at Serowe

Rebuilding the town was a difficult and expensive task. Khama further demonstrated his commitment to mission work, by building three huts for the missionaries at the expense of about £100,⁵³⁹ which Willoughby wrote about saying:

'I think the mission house is safe. Khama has definitely promised to pay for it, and his word has usually been reliable. At the same time, I have always gone on the principle that nothing a native promises is quite sure till you get it in your own hands.'⁵⁴⁰

Despite this exaggerated unreliability of the BaNgwato, in February 1903, Khama handed over £400 to Willoughby, as part of the money he had promised, for the new mission house. He also provided labour by releasing some of his regiments, to make bricks for the same purpose.⁵⁴¹

Willoughby had, for years, called for the development of educational facilities saying this was needed if the Society was to improve its image among the Batswana. To restore that lost prestige, the LMS Directors had in the past established a Central Institution near Vryburg, which was interrupted by the Boer War (see ChapterFour). After that, no effort was made to re-establish the institution. Jennings, of Barkly and Willoughby were, in 1903, pressing the Directors to take immediate action in that direction. For instance, Jennings wrote:

'The continual delay in establishing the new institution at Tiger Kloof causes the committee very grave concern. We fear that the Directors do not realize that the whole existence of this Mission depends upon the immediate and successful organization of this Institution. We do not see how it is possible to continue our hold upon the people unless we are able to educate the sons of the more influential natives and provide ourselves with teachers for our schools and trained Evangelists for our country districts.... No subject has caused the committee nearly so much anxiety as has this. And we think that whatever the Directors are obliged to leave undone, they should either make immediate arrangements for undertaking this most important work,

⁵³⁷ . J. Mackenzie, (1871), op.cit., p.397.

⁵³⁸ . W.C.Willoughby (Cape Town) to L.M.S., January31, 1902, SOAS: B60 F1.

⁵³⁹ .W.C.Willoughby (Palapye), August28, 1902, SOAS: B60 F1, 29/9.

⁵⁴⁰ . W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to L.M.S., February5, 1903, SOAS: B62 F1, 2/3.

⁵⁴¹ . W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to L.M.S., July2, 1903, SOAS: B62 F3, 27/7.

or should frankly recognise that the Bechuana Mission ought to be handed over to some other Society able to do its duty to the people.... The Directors should know that the immediate establishment of this Institution is a matter of life and death to this mission and that even a delay of a few years is likely to undo much of the work of the past generation.⁵⁴²

The LMS Directors finally agreed to re-establish the Tiger Kloof Institution near Vryburg. They subsequently appointed Willoughby for the principalship of the school. This news, which necessitated Willoughby's transfer from Serowe in June 1903, annoyed and distressed Khama. Willoughby wrote saying:

'He says that whenever you have given him a wise and strong man you have not allowed him to stay long, but have soon discovered that you had more important work elsewhere for that man.... He is afraid that you will send him a man who does not know people and things but knows only the teaching and then what will happen to him?'⁵⁴³

In the past, Willoughby had provided Khama with valuable political advice. Soon after his arrival from his furlough in England, in 1900, Willoughby, wrote saying:

'I was not many hours at the station before he came to me for advice in the political affairs, and he came up, on his own initiative, several days for several hours at a time, in order that he might post me up in all that had happened in my absence.'⁵⁴⁴

Even outside their official duties the two men had a lot in common. For example Willoughby wrote of Khama saying:

'Khama is very well, and apparently happy. He spends a good deal of time up here just now, and is giving me the history of his life from earlier recollections. I am writing it down from his dictation, and hope to use it in other form one day. It is full of interest to me, and is quite a college course in the history of the Bamangwato.'⁵⁴⁵

Willoughby's replacement was Albert E.Jennings of the Barkly West Mission. He accepted his appointment with great admiration and thankfulness, saying:

'Your resolution came as a great surprise to me as I had nothing from you previously giving me any hint of such a drastic change. I am not partial to such surprises and have not yet got used to the altered orthodox in missionary career... not unconscious of the honour that the Board has conferred upon me in appointing me to, as I consider it, the charge of the most important of our mission centres...'⁵⁴⁶

Jennings saw Serowe to be of great significance because of its strategic position. It was not only the

⁵⁴². A.E.Jennings (Barkly West) to L.M.S., May20, 1903, SOAS: B68.

⁵⁴³. W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to L.M.S., June4, 1903, B.62.

⁵⁴⁴. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October4, 1900; SOAS: B58.

⁵⁴⁵. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., January18, 1901, SOAS: B59 F1, 11/2.

⁵⁴⁶. A.E.Jennings (Barkly West) to L.M.S., September7, 1903, SOAS: B62.

largest Southern African town, but also provided a more central position for LMS activities in the region. The BaNgwato themselves were a prestigious people to the Society, because of the immense social and economic support they had given to the LMS. Khama himself had granted an unparalleled monopoly status to the LMS in Southern Africa. Although Khama was disappointed by Willoughby's departure, he gladly welcomed his new missionary, Jennings who reached Serowe on October 1st, 1903, in three wagons supplied by Khama.⁵⁴⁷ Describing his first impressions of Serowe, Jennings wrote saying:

'Serowe is still a new town, that is to say the people have not yet prepared their gardens nor finished their huts properly. The missionary is still living in huts, there being no house yet. Indeed the equipment of the mission is very deficient, we have no Church building. We have no school buildings, we have no missionary house, and no Church for the English service.... I have been trying to get the people and the Chief to make a move in the direction of finishing the school, but the poverty is so great and the prospect of a harvest so small that it is impossible to move in the matters.'⁵⁴⁸

Jennings' settlement at Serowe was followed by a series of conflicts between the LMS and the BaNgwato, which jeopardized relations between the two.

5.4. The LMS Fears for Ethiopianism

i). The Ethiopian Movement and the BaNgwato

The question of break away Churches, in Southern Africa, was increasingly becoming a challenge for both kingly power and the LMS monopoly of the Bechuanaland mission field. The Ethiopian movement (succession of independent African Churches from the missionary Churches) which began in South Africa and spread rapidly northward into the Bechuanaland Protectorate, posed a series of threats to the LMS.⁵⁴⁹

The movement grew rapidly in terms of numbers and leadership. With its emphasis on the education and training of indigenous deacons, evangelists and ministers, the American Methodist Ethiopian Church (A.M.E.C.) in Southern Africa had by 1904, grown to 6,000 members and 80 ministers and its number

⁵⁴⁷. A.E. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., October 8, 1903, SOAS: B62 F4; Willoughby, June 4, 1903, B62 F2, 29/6.

⁵⁴⁸. Report of the Serowe Mission, 1903, SOAS: B3, Mission Reports, South Africa, 1895-1905.

⁵⁴⁹. 'The Conflict Between New Religious Movements and the State in the Bechuanaland Prior to 1945' by Boschman, D., MA Thesis, Harvard University, 1989; also see Barrett, D. (1966), *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements*, pp.135-6; C.C.Saunders, 'Tlale and Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Cape Eastern Frontier in the Late Nineteenth Century' in *Journal of African History*, Vol.11, November 4, 1970, p.556.

was forecast to be around 50,000 by 1907.⁵⁵⁰ In an attempt to suppress or regulate this rapidly growing movement, a conference of the Protestant missionaries in Southern Africa was held in 1904. As part of this endeavour an open letter was written to the A.M.E.C. stating that:

'The conference understands Ethiopianism to be the effort in South Africa to establish Native Churches independent of Missionary control, and hostile to it on racial lines. The quickening power of the Gospel, and the inevitable contact of the Native with European civilization have produced an awakening among the Natives throughout South Africa. Ethiopianism is largely misdirected use of their new born energy. For the present at least, it would seem to require not so much repression as careful guidance.

This deplores - (1)the fact that the Ethiopian bodies should so often display an utter lack of regard for principles of Christian comity by entering fields already occupied and by proselytising therein; (2)the lowering of the standards of Christian morals through lax discipline, and by encouraging schism in the Church of Christ; (3)the intensification of the mutual distrust existing between the two great races of this land by the emphasis Ethiopianism is placing upon the colour line.'⁵⁵¹

The LMS accused the Ethiopian movement of promoting political unrest; with its schismatic tendencies through, proselytization and failure to observe strict Christian codes of discipline. They also accused them of feeding the already existing prejudices against European white missionaries and injuring the Church of Christ.

This A.M.E.C. entered Bechuanaland Protectorate through Marcus Gabatshwane, a Morolong A.M.E.C. elder, his son Martin Luther Gabatshwane and Seile, a former LMS evangelist in 1898.⁵⁵² In their attempt to spread the activities of that movement, they went to Kanye, the capital of King Bathoen I of the BaNgwaketse, from 17 25 October, 1898. Bathoen's welcome to these missionaries was however not encouraging. Stressing his allegiance to the LMS, he addressed them saying:

'I am a London, I have always been a London, and if you wish for a change here, you must wait till I have gone and my son Seepapitso is ruling in my stead.'⁵⁵³

Despite this unfavourable reception, their presence led to many years of conflict between the

⁵⁵⁰. D.Boschman, (1989), 'The Conflict Between New Religious Movements and the state in the Bechuanaland Prior to 1945', M.A. Thesis, Harvard University, p.9.

⁵⁵¹. Quoted in D.Boschman, op. cit, p.9; E.Jacottet, (1904), *The Ethiopian Church and the Missionary Conference of Johannesburg ... , August 1904*, p.29).

⁵⁵². D.Boschman, (1989), op.cit., p.11 cites an article by Marcus Gabatshwane published in the *Voice of Missions*, an American Missionary Magazine of the A.M.E.C. (James Sack and his son-in-law Edwin Lloyd were missionaries at Kanye - J. Sack (Kanye) to L.M.S., November 11, 1898; May 27, 1989, SOAS: B55; Lloyd, E., (1895), op.cit., p.141).

⁵⁵³. J. Good (Kanye) to L.M.S., November 11, 1898, SOAS: B55.

Mothowagae's Independent Church, which developed soon afterwards and a threat to the LMS. In 1902 Mothowagae had broken away from the LMS, with 95 Church members, who accounted for a third of the Church membership and a large number of Christian headmen. After returning their membership tickets to Mr. Lloyd, the LMS missionary then, they began their own services with Mothowagae as their minister, administering communion, baptism and marriage rites.⁵⁵⁴

This development greatly worried all the LMS missionaries in the region. Willoughby, who was commissioned to make an enquiry of this problem wrote:

'The least we fear is that the Mothowagae party will definitely ally themselves with the Ethiopian Church, but at present the Chief is opposed to this step.'⁵⁵⁵

Mothowagae broke away from the LMS because Lloyd had refused him ordination. His followers hoped that Mothowagae's leadership would liberate the Church from European control.⁵⁵⁶ In response, Lloyd had charged Mothowagae with misconduct, and labelled him unfit to be an LMS agent.

In order to avoid a division in his town Bathoen allowed Mothowagae to conduct his services at his **Kgotla**.⁵⁵⁷ Fearing that a religious split would become a source of religious power, to his disgruntled headmen, he eventually got rid of Lloyd and called Mothowagae's Church to re unite with the mission Church.⁵⁵⁸ Mothowagae however refused to come back, arguing that the LMS, as a whole, were against him. This left Bathoen with no choice but to try to use force and threats to compel Mothowagae's followers to rejoin the mission Church. He managed to persuade a few, while regardless of persecution that Church continued to operate until 1942 when it faded away, with the death of its founder that same year.⁵⁵⁹

Khama's observation of this Kanye conflict was that the origin of Mothowagae's Church was more of a political matter than anything else. He told Bathoen that this was intended at weakening his kingly power, than advancing Christianity.

⁵⁵⁴. B.N.A., RC, 7/8, June 27, 1902, Lloyd to Ellenberger; B.N.A., RC, 10/11, October 19, 1903, 'Petition to the Acting Assistant Commissioner from the Bangwaketse Mission Church.'

⁵⁵⁵. W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to L.M.S., March 2, 1903, SOAS: B62 F1.

⁵⁵⁶. E. Lloyd, (Kanye) to L.M.S., May 9, 1902, SOAS: B60; B.N.A., RC 10/11, October 19, 1902, M. Mothogelwa.

⁵⁵⁷. B.N.A., RC, 7/8, June 27, 1902, E. Lloyd to Jules Ellenberger.

⁵⁵⁸. Bathoen (Kanye) to L.M.S., May 21, 1903, SOAS: B62 F2, 13/6.

⁵⁵⁹. W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to L.M.S., March 5, 1903, SOAS: B62.

The next appearance of the three A.M.E.C missionaries was in the Francistown area, after they had travelled for more than 600 kilometres, north of Kanye, on the 27 October 1898. Here they met the exiled Ngwato Chief, Mphoeng Sekgoma and also visited Palapye on their way back to the South. Howard Williams, the LMS Missionary at Palapye, reported this visit saying:

'It will be no surprise to the Foreign Secretary to hear that we have had a visit from a representative (a coloured man) of the American Episcopal or Ethiopian Church. He came here and was particularly anxious to impress upon me the disinterestedness of his visit. Khama I hear refused to see him. I fear we have serious trouble in store for us from this source.'⁵⁶⁰

From Palapye, the missionaries went back to Mafeking. But in 1912 Siele, one of three missionaries, was reported to have arrived in Molepolole from Mafeking, seeking to start an Ethiopian Church there.⁵⁶¹

Fearful of the effects of the spread of Ethiopianism in Bechuanaland, the local LMS missionaries of the B.D.C. resolved to dismiss from their stations and suspend from Church membership those evangelists who encouraged Ethiopianism.⁵⁶² The allegation that Khama had invited the A.M.E.C. to work to develop education in his country, in 1902 caused great alarm in the LMS circles. A.C.Rideout's letter, which appeared in the August number of the Lovedale *Christian Express*, read thus:

'Just a few days ago we had another call from Paramount Chief Kama (sic) of Bechuanaland, who makes a similar offer to us as the Basutos, the difference being this: The buildings are ready for use, the same being occupied by other Missionary people who abandoned them and left the country, and the government desires Paramount Chief Kama (sic) to take them over. The Chief has written a letter and sent it to the Bishop and conference by the Rev. John L. Morolong, but received no reply; therefore he dispatched a man to me. I will do the best I can and have advised him that the matter will be looked into at the earliest opportunity.'⁵⁶³

But when W.C. Willoughby took the matter up with Khama, who openly told him that:

.'... that there was absolutely no truth at all in the matter, that he had asked no other

⁵⁶⁰. H. Williams, Report of the Palapye Mission, 1898, B3, Mission Reports, South Africa, December 31, 1898.

⁵⁶¹. Khama, (Serowe) to L.M.S., December 23, 1913, SOAS: B75, F6.

⁵⁶². Minutes of the B.D.C., March 24, 1899, SOAS: B56.

⁵⁶³. Quoted in D. Boschman, (1989), op.cit., p.16: printed in the *Christian Express*, Vol.32, No.383 (August 1, 1903), p.115.

Church to do anything.’⁵⁶⁴

Although Khama wrote to the *Christian Express* demanding that the A.M.E.C should produce the letter, he was said to have written, he did not receive any response. In the meantime, Ralph Williams, the Resident Commissioner, wrote on behalf of the Colonial Government saying:

‘The Chiefs and people would be foolish indeed to do anything to disturb the golden ease in which they are placed. I don’t mind what religion they adopt, but do not let them confound religion with politics. I am glad therefore that Khama has disowned all connection with this matter but wish denial had been little more and explicit.’⁵⁶⁵

In an attempt to secure a monopoly on that field, the LMS informed Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial secretary in London, that if the A.M.E.C. was allowed to continue their operation in Bechuanaland, a political unrest could not be ruled out. It is interesting to note that, while Khama saw the unity between religion and politics as a source of his kingly power, both the colonial office and the LMS missionaries wanted a separation of the two. The latter found it easier to exert their influence if the two spheres were isolated. The LMS also found it very difficult to exercise their ecclesiastical authority, where a King claimed authority over both the religious and the political spheres. Their experiences with Khama, as shown in the foregoing chapters, taught them to make a distinct separation between the two because religion was seen as a powerful uniting force for the BaNgwato.

In the meantime, Jennings still struggled with what he saw as an Ethiopian influence.⁵⁶⁶ In October, he complained that the movement sought to revive traditional customs and mix them with Christianity, saying:

‘You will still have fresh in your mind the history of the difficulties which the committee met together to consider herein last October. I am glad to say most of these difficulties have faded away, though there still remains a small minority of would-be Ethiopians who for the present are unable to publicly avow the presence for this semi-religious organization, owing to the loyalty of the chief to our society. They are merely suppressed, however, and await other days, when they can air their own opinions by publicly recognizing this Ethiopian Movement.’⁵⁶⁷

Jennings specifically blamed the Ratshosa family, especially Simon Ratshosa for the Ethiopian attitudes, which he said were anti-European. Simon did not only have an excellent education, but also possessed a good knowledge of tribal law and custom, as well as the intricacies of the colonial administration, of

⁵⁶⁴. W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to L.M.S., August 21, 1902, SOAS: 60, 15/9.

⁵⁶⁵. B.N.A., RC S/178/1, September 26, 1902, Ralph Williams to W.C. Willoughby.

⁵⁶⁶. A.E. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., October 29, 1903, SOAS: B62 F4, 23/1.

⁵⁶⁷. Report of the Serowe Mission, 1904, B3, Mission Reports, South Africa, 1898-1905.

which he was very critical.⁵⁶⁸ In 1910 Jennings also accused Simon Seisa, one of the Ngwato men who accompanied Khama to London as his secretary, of leading an anti-LMS campaign.⁵⁶⁹

By 1913 the LMS was not only threatened by Ethiopianism but also Anglicanism as well.⁵⁷⁰ The involvement of the Anglicans, in the fight for recognition in the Bechuanaland Mission field, compelled the colonial officials to grant freedom of religious association and expression. But when Khama was asked to allow an Anglican missionary to reside, with Rauwe's people, at Selepeng he refused.⁵⁷¹ He instead warned the LMS of the danger of failing to improve their stations saying:

'It is also worthwhile drawing your attention to the fact that some other denominations appear anxious to gain firm footing in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. At Kanye there is or has been what is called Ethiopia, at Molepolole there is the Church of England, and along the northern border of my country there is Rauwe with the Church of England also; whether these changes are reported to you by the missionaries here or not that I am not able to say, but I only wish to state that where your work is weak or you have no strong supporters these denominations are sure to set in and subvert you, either entirely or partially. For very often their entrance into existence, is marked by the winning over of a large number of your Church members into theirs. Yet even those who remain in the L.M.S. are not always reliable men. Something peculiar about these denominations is that they will admit those people who have been excommunicated in our denominations. May I state also that my denomination is that of the L.M.S.; and, if possible, I do not wish to allow any more denominations in my country. My greater desire is that you may retain your early state when everything will be well for us all.'⁵⁷²

The BaKhurutshe of Chief Rauwe had left Palapye in 1895, after residing there for several years and settled in their ancestral home of Selepeng, which was now occupied by the Tati Concession Company.⁵⁷³ In 1898 the LMS appointed A.J.Gould as a missionary among the BaKhurutshe people.⁵⁷⁴ By August 1903 relations between Gould and the BaKhurutshe had deteriorated due to what

⁵⁶⁸. Mockford, J., *Khama: King of the Bangwato*, p.265.

⁵⁶⁹. A.E.Jennings, (Durban), to L.M.S., October 20, 1910, SOAS: B72 F7.

⁵⁷⁰. R.H. Lewis, (Molepolole) to L.M.S., June 6, 1913, SOAS: B75 F3; October 13, 1913, SOAS: B75 F6.

⁵⁷¹. J.T.Brown, Secretary of B.D.C., Executive Minutes held at Tiger Kloof, December 2, 1913, SOAS: B75 F6.

⁵⁷². Khama (Serowe) to L.M.S., December 23, 1913, SOAS: B75 F6.

⁵⁷³. W.C.Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., January 8, 1897, SOAS: B54 F1 JA.

⁵⁷⁴. A.J.Gould, (Selepeng) to L.M.S., June 1, 1900, SOAS: B58 F2 7/7.

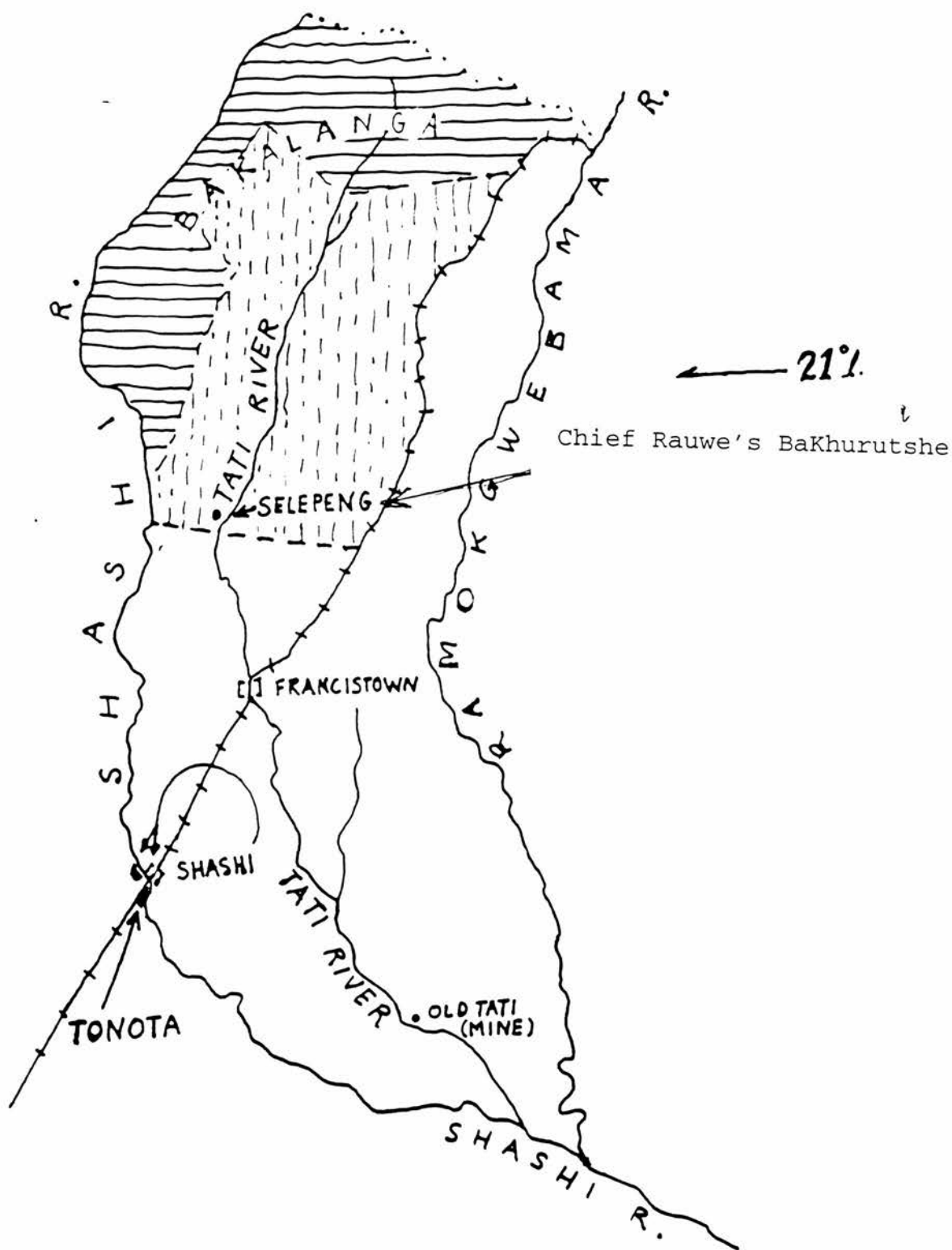


Fig.32
Thanks to Q.N. Parsons for the map.

the former saw as Ethiopian influence.⁵⁷⁵

In a series of meetings, addressed by Willoughby and his other LMS colleagues. Tumedi, the most experienced deacon and Church leader before Gould's arrival, told the Enquiry that:

'The trouble began this year at ploughing time. The deacons had to plough and their gardens were often far away so that they did not always obey the law and come in to the preachers' class on Saturdays. Mr. Gould rebuked them for thinking more of their ploughing than of God's work, he urged those who were tired to confess it and allow others to take up the work. They denied being tired. He then said to Seepamore, Modisa and Raditsebe, 'I will cut you off because you plough too much and have no time for the work of God.' I sought to turn him aside and asked if I was of the same fashion. I said I did not see they had been guilty of any fault and that began the quarrel.'⁵⁷⁶

The Church members were against certain Church laws, imposed upon them by Mr Gould. Amongst the most sensitive was the yearly payment of **Phalalo** (Church fund - annual Church subscriptions for membership and evangelical work)) - which was fixed at £12 for every male and £6 for females annually; and the disciplinary laws such as abstinence from drinking **bojalwa** (traditional beer). Seeing this as a criteria for Church membership, on June 13, 20 members including Tumedi, were suspended from membership because of failure to pay their **Phalalo**. Tumedi subsequently lost his privileges to administer communion.⁵⁷⁷

Another criticism against Gould, which came from Seepamore, was that, while he readily lent his ox-wagon to a white trader, he had refused to allow him to use it to visit a sick man, saying, 'Let the dead bury the dead,' Seepamore also told the commission of inquiry that 'Gould was scolding me for greasing a wagon wheel on Sunday afternoon.'⁵⁷⁸

In response to all these accusations, directed against him, Gould complained that the Church had fallen into a sloth, drunkenness, sexual immorality and general coldness. He complained that they cared more for their ploughing, which he said was a waste of time, than teaching.⁵⁷⁹ Willoughby and his colleagues concluded that Gould's hasty methods and his impatience with people's customs was

⁵⁷⁵. Committee of Enquiry led by Reid and Wilkenson, September 15, 1903, SOAS: B62 F3.

⁵⁷⁶. Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷. Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸. Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹. A.J. Gould, (Selepeng) to L.M.S., August 7, 1903, SOAS: B62 F3; March 4, 1904, SOAS: B64 F1.

basically the reason for the conflict. But they also realised that there was an Ethiopian influence to it.⁵⁸⁰ In September 1904 Gould was forced to resign, stating that:

'I am inclined to think it is not so much a personal matter, as a principle. They do not want any restriction over their hearts' desires. This desire is gratified by the Ethiopians, and I am told that by the 'Free Church', whatever that church may be. Its name is suggestive.'

The BaKhurutshe now saw themselves to be a 'Free Church.' Seeing this, to be an Ethiopian, inspired influence Gould called on the British officials to stop the Ethiopians occupying that field, saying:

'It is evident from their past behaviour and also from the rumours, that they are desirous of obtaining the services of the Ethiopian Church instead of the London Missionary Society as at present, otherwise to have two Churches in Selepeng, thus introducing division into the town... Will the Government prevent the Ethiopians from coming in.'⁵⁸¹

Although the Resident Commissioner at Serowe was thankful for the information regarding the Ethiopian Church, he found no proof that they acted in a political manner or that they spoke sedition against the Government. He therefore refused to stop their activities. He also pointed out that premature measures against the movement might prove self-defeating and make it appear important and attractive.⁵⁸²

Finding that the Tati Concession Company connived with the LMS in restricting their religious activities the BaKhurutshe decided to move from that territory which was controlled by the former. They settled in Monyanduswe, where they formed the Bakhurutshe Free Church and subsequently invited the Anglican mission to work amongst them. In 1913 Rauwe negotiated, with Khama, to return with his people back to Ngwato territory, after breaking away for 18 years, while the Assistant Commissioner, Daniel, encouraged the Anglican Church to send a white clergyman into Khama's country, with the BaKhurutshe. Khama insisted on a one - Church - one state policy and made the abandonment of Anglicanism a pre-condition to the Bakhurutshe's return. This meant that they had to acknowledge the Serowe Church's and Khama's own authority.

Back in Serowe Jennings spoke of the 'jealousy of the Ethiopians' to the successes of the LMS missionaries and their influence on Khama. He also complained of what he called an 'altogether anti-white' and 'semi-political', 'semi-religious' faith which he said was a good example of the blind

⁵⁸⁰. Ibid.

⁵⁸¹. B.N.A., S178/1, September 13, 1908, Gould to R.C. Panzerra.

⁵⁸². B.N.A., S178/1, October 17, 1904, R.C. Panzerra to Gould.

leading the blind.⁵⁸³ Closely associated with this conflict was the misunderstanding caused by the educational incompetence of the LMS.⁵⁸⁴

5.5. Education in Serowe

By the early twentieth century, there was no single secondary education offered, in the whole of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The nearest Kudumane institution, or later, the Tiger Kloof, was 530 kilometres away. Khama had wanted such a school in his own territory, but both the colonial government and the LMS preferred to develop only the Tiger Kloof in Vryburg (see Chapter4).

In 1902 Ella Sharp, Young's successor complained of the uncertainty of her work, saying:

'Many of my big boys have gone, but I have a fairly good amount still, as many of the 'Outside School' scholars have come in to me, their teachers being away. I have had some difficulty, and indeed, am still able to obtain native helpers who can teach. My best native boy teacher has just left me to go to Lovedale to obtain his teacher's certificates. I am trying two young girls now, but they are too young to take charge of the classes which have such big boys and girls in, as have all my classes now.'⁵⁸⁵

When Sekgoma left Palapye, he had taken away a large number of the children and good teachers in Sharp's school. The attendance dropped and she had to start afresh. Although, by March 1903, school desks, boards, and books had finally come from Palapye, Sharp could not effectively commence her school work because of lack of proper classrooms and efficient helpers. She had to work under the trees on the outskirts of the mission grounds. In a more discouraged tone she therefore wrote saying:

'This year, I thought I should have had a little efficient help from a Lovedale boy who has come back, but I could not offer him sufficient money, and he has started a school on his own in the Makalaka section of the town.'⁵⁸⁶

In May 1904 Jennings complained that the situation had not changed at all:

'The condition of this station is anything but satisfactory. The slackness of the tribe in making preparation for accommodation in the matter of buildings both for school and Church, has been a great disappointment to me since my arrival here last year. In vain I have tried to get the people to make the slightest effort in this

⁵⁸³. A.E.Jennings (Barkly West) to L.M.S., May22, 1902, SOAS: B60.

⁵⁸⁴. W.C.Willoughby (Tiger Kloof) to L.M.S., January2, 1904, SOAS, B66.B.N.A., S178/1, September13, 1904, Gould to R.C. Panzerra.

⁵⁸⁵. E.Sharp, (Palapye) to L.M.S., March15, 1902, SOAS: B60 F1 14/4.

⁵⁸⁶. E.Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., March4, 1903, SOAS: B62 F1 30/3; July22, 1903, B62 F3 31/8.

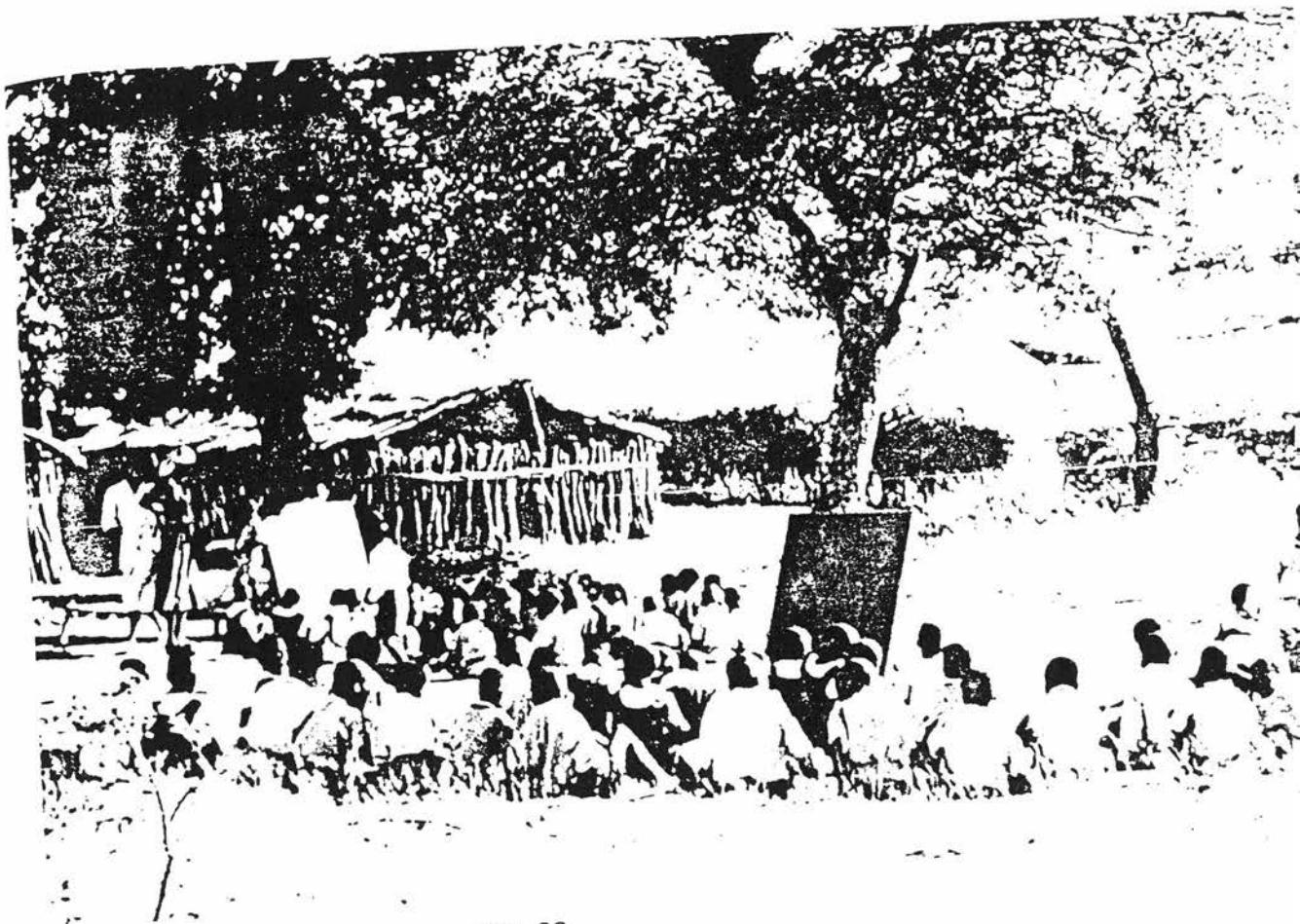


Fig.33

An outside class at a mission school: this was a common practice during the early settlement at Serowe (T.Tlou, (19840 p.139). In 1903 Miss E. Sharp was still working under trees.



Fig.34

Khama's Jubilee in 1911: the races - the finish point.
(LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS)

direction.⁵⁸⁷

When the BaNgwato removed from Palapye, Willoughby had suggested that the site could be used for the proposed new institution. In consultation with his people, Khama had affirmed saying:

'Yes: You can build your new school there if you like, and we will not disturb you.
But we do not sell the land.'⁵⁸⁸

But Khama, desiring that the proposed school should be open to all, refused to offer a private land right. When Willoughby insisted on buying, Khama refused to 'give away any more land'.⁵⁸⁹ Jennings later observed that 'this buying of land is altogether repulsive to the native mind'.⁵⁹⁰ Willoughby also told the Directors that:

'Khama went to the assistant commissioner and told him about it and said that they didn't wish to alienate any more land: they had given the strip for the railway and the strip along the crocodile to the government and they did not wish to alienate any more.'⁵⁹¹

The subsequent establishment of the Tiger Kloof in Vryburg met resentment from the BaNgwato, which lasted for years, because they could not understand why the LMS refused to accept the free usage of the site and the buildings at Palapye.⁵⁹²

To resolve this conflict, Jennings invited Howard Williams from Shoshong, to assist in interviewing Khama and some of the prominent men at Serowe. Howard considered the Ngwato dissatisfaction, with the education provided by the LMS, as a distinct menace to the future of their work.⁵⁹³ But Jennings blamed this unstable state of affairs on the radical tendencies of the 'lawless section of the tribe, evidently pro-Ethiopian and headed by Ratshosa and his following'.⁵⁹⁴ He found that several young

⁵⁸⁷. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., May3, 1904, SOAS: B64.

⁵⁸⁸. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 3, 1902, SOAS: B60.

⁵⁸⁹. Minutes of the Meetings of the B.D.C. (Palapye) May 22-31, 1902, SOAS: B60.

⁵⁹⁰. Ibid.

⁵⁹¹. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June9, 1902, SOAS: B60 F1 7/7.

⁵⁹². A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., May3, 1904, SOAS: B64.

⁵⁹³. A.E.Jennings, (L.M.S.) to L.M.S., August18, 1904, SOAS: B64 F1 12/9. Also see W.C. Willoughby (Vryburg) to L.M.S., August20, 1904, 12/9.

⁵⁹⁴. Minutes of B.D.C. Meeting held at Serowe, October26, 1904, SOAS: B64.

chiefs and headmen returning from various denominational institutions, especially Lovedale in the Cape Colony and the French Basutoland Institution not very helpful at all.

The BaNgwato told the B.D.C meeting at Serowe in October 1904 that one of the ways of improving the backward conditions of education in their territory was by replacing a female teacher with a male one.⁵⁹⁵ They wanted a male teacher to replace Miss Sharp in teaching their boys. The B.D.C. agreed to the request, on condition that the Ngwato stopped their boycott of the Tiger Kloof Institution. Due to the opposition from the female missionaries this arrangement was never implemented and the missionaries stated that:

'We as a committee hold that education is not the primary work of a Missionary Society. We do it because the Government has not yet taken its proper responsibility. We are strongly of the opinion that the Government is the proper authority for this work.... So long as a section of the tribe is able to bring political dissensions into educational matters, education is to that extent crippled, and a certain political section here is undoubtedly making capital out of the school question. We as a Missionary Society are not able to cope with these factions; but a Government using revenue for educational purposes, appointing and maintaining teachers, and providing free education, is in an altogether different position. Should the Government see its way to take over educational matters in the Protectorate, our brethren in that territory will be free to devote their individual energies to the work for which they were primarily sent out.'⁵⁹⁶

The celebration, marking the laying of the foundation stone of Tiger Kloof, seemed to have temporarily brought an end to the Ngwato boycott of that school. Khama had paid for six of his leading men and also allowed twenty two others to attend the occasion in 1905.⁵⁹⁷ Khama had told these men to go there with very critical eyes, and to see for themselves what it was like. The men who had a very good impression, brought back a good report of the school. In that year, as a result, the total number of Ngwato boys at the Tiger Kloof boarding school rose to more than 38, some of whom were Khama's sons-in-law and grandsons.⁵⁹⁸ Khama had also made a gift of £120 for the payment of a turret clock, for the Institution.⁵⁹⁹ Despite this positive response of the BaNgwato, in 1906 Jennings was still very critical of the LMS contribution in the education field. In 1904, for instance, he wrote to the Directors saying:

'... for we are unable to fulfil our responsibilities on the educational side of our work

⁵⁹⁵. Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶. H.Williams (Chairman and Jennings (Secretary) (Serowe), October 26, 1904, Meetings of October 15-17, Serowe, SOAS: B64 F1).

⁵⁹⁷. A.E.Jenning (Serowe) to L.M.S., September 8, 1905, SOAS: B66 F3.

⁵⁹⁸. E.Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., September 28, 1905, SOAS: B66 F3, 23/10.

⁵⁹⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Tiger Kloof) to L.M.S., May 17, 1906, SOAS: B67 F3, 10/4.

and it is useless to deceive ourselves into the belief that we are.’⁶⁰⁰

In his Mission Report of 1904-1912 he further wrote saying:

‘We are continually being discussed by these boys for providing backward educational facilities as compared with any other Society which might be called in our place, and they are of the opinions that these other hypothetical Churches would respond gladly to any invitation to begin operating here. Indeed they look upon us as obligated to them for allowing us to teach them, and are of the opinion that the last punishment they could inflict upon us would be to pack up our strips and clear out.... I give it as my opinion that this persistent repetition of the failure of the L.M.S. to provide proper educational facilities is at least bearing fruit, both in Khama’s mind and in the mind of the tribe.... We are, and have been for years, self-convicted in the matter of educational provision for this tribe.’⁶⁰¹

Between 1900 and 1901 the BaNgwato had entrusted, to the missionaries, over £1728 for the development of education. To see their school as a mere iron roof, without walls to protect their children and teachers against wind, rain, dust and sun, due to the mismanagement of this money caused a lot of grievances to the BaNgwato.⁶⁰² When E.B.Sargent’s (an Educational Adviser to the High Commissioner) 1906 Classic Report suggested levying an educational tax providing free education, Khama rejected the proposal because such arrangements had in the past worked towards the detriment of his people.⁶⁰³ Some Ngwato elite, who wanted education to be free from every form of European aid, therefore, began an opposing school, which the B.D.C. critically described, saying:

‘The so-called school of John Racosa at Serowe, has been much exaggerated it being a school without building, apparatus, curriculum, or regular school year... The Committee does not endorse Mr.Sargent’s statement that this school is an indication of Khama’s sympathies towards Ethiopianism.’⁶⁰⁴

The establishment of this independent, elementary school, invariably known as the **Kgotla** school or the Serowe Private School, partly resulted from the LMS refusal to employ the ‘Lovedale Boys’ in October 1904. Its origin therefore had a popular, national and anti-ecclesiastical appeal. The school had apparently been founded by the Ratshosa brothers, Simon and Johnnie, who later became the Magistrate’s interpreter. The two men had received a good education at Morija (Lesotho), Lovedale and Zonnebloem (in South Africa) by 1905. Although Simon Ratshosa, the author of *My Book on Bechuanaland* was the most educated Mongwato, the LMS had also refused to employ him in its

⁶⁰⁰. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., December2, 1904, SOAS: B64.

⁶⁰¹. Report of the Serowe Mission, 1911, B4, *Mission Report, 1904-1912*.

⁶⁰². A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S, May3, 1906: SOAS: B67.

⁶⁰³. E.B.Sargent, ‘Report on Native Education in South Africa: Part III - Education in the Protectorate’, pp.40-5.

⁶⁰⁴. Minutes of the B.D.C. Meetings held at Kanye, January21 - February1, 1907, SOAS: B68 F3.

Central School.

5.6. The Union Controversy

In 1907 Willoughby published an article, in the December issue of the *Chronicle*, on the Tiger Kloof and the attitude of the Tswana Kings. In this paper, he attacked Khama for sending his boys to Lovedale and the Basutoland Institutions instead of Tiger Kloof.⁶⁰⁵ This marked the beginning of another severe conflict between the BaNgwato and the LMS.

In August 1909 at a Native Advisory Council Meeting held at Kudumane, Willoughby, again, referred to the proposed unification of South Africa. He further explained the role which was to be played by the Cape Parliament in that union. When Khama heard of what Willoughby had said, about his country being finally absorbed into South Africa, he called Edwin Lloyd to Serowe for questioning. Lloyd wrote about this saying:

'The Chief then asked me how it was that the missionaries discussed politics at the Council. He said - "I thought that the missionaries would have discussed the best means of helping the Churches to go forward. I did not think that you would have talked about the land and taxes."⁶⁰⁶

Khama, in a long indictment of Willoughby, told Lloyd that:

'I know Olloby; he is always speaking about the land, for I know he wants to see our land divided into farms, and given over to the white people. This is what he always talks about; no matter what he begins to talk about, he invariably falls into this subject of politics. He walks in the same road as Mackenzie who joined the Government.'⁶⁰⁷

Khama opposed this talk of unification and the role played by the LMS missionaries in promoting it because he saw his country as independent from South Africa.⁶⁰⁸ It was, in fact, Willoughby's support for the political intentions of the Cape Government that made Khama so angry, because this same missionary had also told the LMS Directors that:

'When the present chiefs go, the territory now called the Protectorate will revert more and more to European control, and individual tenure will find its way in. The present

⁶⁰⁵. A.E. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., January 17, 1908, SOAS: B69 F1.

⁶⁰⁶. E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., August 20, 1909, SOAS, B71 F2.

⁶⁰⁷. Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸. E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., September 29, 1909, SOAS: B71 F3; See W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 9, 1902, SOAS: B60 F1, 7/7.

system of tribal tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate we are bound to keep as a matter of honesty towards chiefs who have been extremely loyal to us, and when they have gone I know no argument which will support the retention of the present arrangement.⁶⁰⁹

In support of Willoughby's words, the High Commissioner, Lord Selbourne, also publicly told the Protectorate's Kings and chiefs that, according to the 1910 Act of Union, the Protectorate was finally to be incorporated into South Africa.⁶¹⁰

In yet another meeting the United District Council (U.D.C.) held at Inyati on April 18-30, 1910, the idea of the Union was discussed and accepted by the LMS missionaries. This resulted in the drafting of a scheme of the Unification of the LMS churches in Bechuanaland, South Africa and Ndebeleland. The statement, proposing the scheme, read as follows:

'That it is in unison with the fundamental principles of the L.M.S. to draw up a scheme for the unification of Churches under the different missionaries and to propose it for the adoption of Churches. That the excessive individualism at present prevailing in our Church organization, the divergence of opinion, and procedure, the tendency of chiefs and other influential people to dominate the local assemblies, make it imperative that a scheme for the whole mission should be adopted and enforced as soon as possible.'⁶¹¹

In their Annual Meeting, held at Tiger Kloof on 28th February to 10th March 1911, the South African District Council (S.A.D.C) of the LMS adopted the Unification Scheme,⁶¹² and produced a Circular on the 'Unification' of churches, which was met with intense opposition from the Ngwato people. When Jennings came back from the S.A.D.C. he held a series of meetings, with the Ngwato, to introduce the 'Circular' which included his appearance before the Magistrate in connection with it. He wrote of this saying:

'It has raised a tremendous fuss both outside and inside the Church, but as I have not yet come to an end of the matter and it requires a good day or two to report the whole proceedings, I shall send you that report next mail.'⁶¹³

In his attempt to influence the BaNgwato to accepted the scheme, he presented copies of the circular

⁶⁰⁹. London Missionary Society, Private and Confidential Reports: Reply by A.E.Jennings to W.C.Willoughby's Statement in Mulligan,K.M., (1974), 'Alfred Jennings: The Political Activities of the London Missionary Society in Bechuanaland, 1900-1935', p.79.

⁶¹⁰. E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., August17, 1910, SOAS: B72 F7; W.C.Willoughby (Vryburg) to L.M.S., May5, 1906, SOAS: B67.

⁶¹¹. J.T.Brown, Secretary of the U.D.C., April29, 1910, SOAS: B72 F6.

⁶¹². First Annual Meeting of the S.A.D.C. of the L.M.S. held February28 - March10, 1922, SOAS: B73 F3.

⁶¹³. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) January14, 1912, SOAS: B74 F3.

to the deacons at a meeting on December 23, 1911. These deacons decided to mention the contents of the 'Circular' to the Ngwato officials, who immediately summoned a **Kgotla** meeting on the morning of the 9th of January to consider the scheme. The **Kgotla** rejected the scheme and sanctioned 20 headmen to take Jennings to the Magistrate's Court for questioning on the issue. Jennings afterwards wrote to the LMS Directors saying:

'Upon arrival at the Court House, I was met by about twenty men nearly equally divided between members of the Church, the second Ntwetwe - a deacon of the Church, and the third - Gagoitse - a son of Khama's brother Seretse, and a heathen.'⁶¹⁴

The **Kgotla** spokesmen made three charges against the LMS which read as follows:

1. 'This circular suggests ousting Chief Khama from the Church, because he interfered with it.'
2. 'They also provide back a way into the Union of South Africa. We have refused to join that Union, and so the missionaries are trying to achieve that result by uniting the Churches first, which will be merely a preliminary step to the Union of the countries.'
3. 'They also bring into the Church compulsory obedience to rules and regulations, binding all the Churches to observe them, including the Churches that do not agree with the Scheme ...'

The idea of separating the king from the Church, like the Unification scheme, was seen as politically motivated. But for Jennings this problem was inspired by the 'half educated youths'. He further explained that **Bokopano** (Union), which for BaNgwato had political connotations, would free the Church and protect the faith from the 'annoying' and 'troubling' Kings. In response Ntwetwe, one of the headmen and deacons sent to represent the **Kgotla** at the Magistrate's office, said:

'I am speaking on behalf of the tribe. The people are afraid of the words contained in the circular because it is laid down after the Union of the Churches (sic) the Church members will be bound by rules and regulations to which will be included rules and regulations dealing with the interference of the chiefs and headmen who destroy in Church affairs. The tribe fears these regulations as up to the present they have no such knowledge of interference on the part of our chief in Church affairs. We fear the wording of the circular because it refers to Union (of the countries), and this Church union we fear will lead to the union of the countries to which we have already objected. We are afraid of this union because we understand that after the union of the Churches has taken place we shall have to be bound together and what has been bound cannot free itself from its bounds'.⁶¹⁵

Another delegate, Gagotshegwe also rejected the accusation that Khama interfered in Church affairs, saying:

'Our chief has well protected our interests. He has abolished circumcision ... what he does not approve of the Church also does not approve of. We mean we are one with our chief.'

When Jennings tried to gain an audience with Khama, in order to explain the purpose of the scheme, Khama refused to meet him saying: 'I [Jennings] was the Head of the Church, and could do what I

⁶¹⁴. Ibid.

⁶¹⁵. Ibid.

thought best.’⁶¹⁶

Khama however finally agreed to Jennings addressing the BaNgwato at the **Kgotla**. But the BaNgwato, arguing that they were against the idea of two Churches in one town - one for the headmen and Khama and the other for common people, refused to accept the ‘Circular’.⁶¹⁷ In fact Jennings says that ‘not a single soul voted in favour of joining the union.’⁶¹⁸ J.H.Hawkins, the newly appointed LMS Foreign Secretary, agreed with the Ngwato interpretation that the ‘Union of Churches’ was political. In response to this, Jennings wrote to him saying:

‘You say the impression has got abroad that it is a political move. I am afraid I do not follow you. Nothing happens here that is not political, that is to say the Church and state are of necessity - on account of the outstanding character of Khama’s life and faith - one connected whole. Khama is the state and the state means Khama. Khama means Church, and it is natural that it in the eyes of both Church members and heathens, the Church means Khama: he and I both agree that it is not so, but the popular ideal prevails. The heathen section therefore realise that their own chance lies in dividing Khama from it, hence they magnify any little event that offers the smallest handle for their purpose, thus hoping to bring Khama as head of the state into opposition to one as the head of the Church - which is what nearly happened’⁶¹⁹

In an attempt to ensure their political and religious independence, the BaNgwato became very critical of any motive of the missionaries, colonists and traders which seemed to introduce something foreign.⁶²⁰ They saw Serowe as their religious and political headquarters, a place from which they could monitor every development in the territory. From Serowe then, every political and religious affair had to be controlled. The best example of this relationship between Serowe and its outstations was Shoshong itself.

When the LMS decided to re-occupy Shoshong in 1902, the directors had to first seek Khama’s approval to allow Howard Williams to settle there.⁶²¹ In 1906 he disapproved the appointment of A.J.

⁶¹⁶. Ibid.

⁶¹⁷. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., January 19, 1912, SOAS: B74 F3.

⁶¹⁸. Ibid.

⁶¹⁹. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., May 23, 1912, SOAS: B74 F4.

⁶²⁰. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., February 17, 1904, SOAS: B66 F1, 3/3; March 17, August 18, SOAS: B66 F3; October 23, 1909, SOAS: B71 F4.

⁶²¹. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 28, 1902, SOAS: B60 F1, 29/9; February 5, 1903, B62 F1, 2/3.

Gould, as a replacement of Williams because of his refusal to comply with kingly authority.⁶²² Seeing that Williams was a man of integrity and diligence,⁶²³ who dealt in Ngwato affairs with great objectivity and great sensitivity, Khama wanted him to stay for much longer. With Khama having objected to Gould's settlement at Shoshong in 1907, the Directors again requested him to accept Lloyd as Williams' replacement. Lloyd, while having published his book *Three Great African Chiefs* in Khama's support during the London talks, still had a very unpopular reputation among both the BaNgwato and BaNgwaketse.⁶²⁴ Despite this, Khama granted that request, on condition that he did not promote separation of Shoshong from Serowe and Khama's rule. The chiefs of the two Shoshong sections, Ntsaga of the Baphaleng and Chwene of the Bakaa also stressed this point. The Bakaa chief, who was himself a member of the Church and Khama's son-in-law, told Jennings that:

'... if the chief and the Moruti of Serowe agree to the coming of Mr.Lloyd, I have nothing to say - let him come.'⁶²⁵

For his part, the Baphaleng chief, who was also a regular Church attender also said:

'Yes if the chief and the Moruti agree to give us Mr.Lloyd, then we also say let him come, but we have two things to say:

(1) When Mr.Lloyd was here before he taught us that the Phaleng were not Manwato (sic) and tried to divide us from the tribe, and we objected to that teaching. If Mr.Lloyd has given up that doctrine - let him come.

(2) Secondly, we do not agree with the idea of there being two Churches in the territory of one chief, the one with one set of Church regulations and the other with a different one. Let there be one set of Church laws for the whole of the London Churches in the land of Khama, as we are all the parent Church to be applied to all the village Churches.'⁶²⁶

When Khama introduced Lloyd to the Shoshong population he also repeated the same policy saying:

'That this is one country, and has one chief, and one Church: therefore, there should be one Church law throughout this country.... Khama also asked that nothing should be done by the missionaries concerning the country (as distinct from the Church).'⁶²⁷

During this welcoming celebration Kgamane, Khama's younger brother, who acted as a sort of paramount chief at Shoshong, the other two chiefs, the Church, the Serowe Church representatives and

⁶²². A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., November13, 1906, SOAS: B67, F6.

⁶²³. H.William (Shoshong) to L.M.S., August2, 1902, SOAS: B62 F3, 31/8.

⁶²⁴. Ibid.

⁶²⁵. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., June13, 1907, SOAS: B68 F3.

⁶²⁶. Ibid.

⁶²⁷. E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., December31, 1907, SOAS: B68 F4, also see E.Lloyd, February24, 1908, B69 F1, A.E.Jennings, June13, 1907.

the general public all stressed Khama's words.

In this political and religious structure, Khama and his Serowe headquarters became the final authorities. In July 1912 Lloyd refused to comply with that authority and had to leave Shoshong. Lloyd's problems began when Chwene requested him to publish banns of marriage between his brother Bakaa - Batsile and his daughter, Gaokohile (Goakogile). Although Lloyd had already married Chwene's other daughter to Johnnie Ratshosa her cousin, on December 23, 1911, he now refused to do so because he saw marriage of uncle and niece as repugnant in 'European law'.⁶²⁸ The Phaleng community therefore boycotted the missionary and subsequently reported the matter to Khama, who demanded that the Phaleng couple be married. They also complained that Lloyd was inefficient, unsociable, and more interested in marriage charges than the welfare of the people.⁶²⁹ When Khama personally paid a surprise visit to investigate the matter in January 1913, Lloyd refused to meet him, at Kgamane's house, for fear of a measles infection. On the Sunday Lloyd invited Khama to communion, but Khama also declined, for fear of infecting Lloyd and left without having met the missionary.⁶³⁰ In the same year Hawkins visited Serowe from London and found Khama adamant that Lloyd be removed from Shoshong. Lloyd was very angry, but eventually returned to Europe as a Congregational military chaplain.⁶³¹

The crucial issue here was Lloyd's interference with the custom of political marriages, which were carried out to create strong ties between the Kings and their headmen. Lloyd's attempt to forbid such marriages, on the basis that they were illegal in 'European law', was seen as an imposition of alien customs. Like Lloyd, Jennings had, in 1904, forced all Church members at Serowe to re-marry in civil law; which saw 50 couples, including those who were up to 70 years of age and deacons remarried. He wrote saying:

'I am very glad to be able to report an interesting movement among the Bagamangwato in the direction of legal marriages. When I came here I was considerably surprised to find that quite a large percentage of the Church members were not legally married. In Bankly such a marriage was essential to Church membership, as I think is the case in all of our mission stations. But here even the Deacons are for the most part unmarried legally, and it is easy to see how such a thing came about. These men were converted after their marriage according to heathen customs. It was not considered necessary at that time of the Church to insist on a remarriage according to European law, and it has since been difficult to

⁶²⁸ E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., July9, 1912, SOAS: B74.

⁶²⁹ E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., August7, 1912, B74 F5; Lloyd to Khama, July1, 1913, B76.

⁶³⁰ E.Lloyd to Jennings, January25, 1913, SOAS: B76.

⁶³¹ Hawkins to L.M.S., January27, February1 and 17, 1913, B76.

determine the precise time to withdraw this concession to heathen custom.... We have now decided that no person shall be received into the Church who is not properly married, and all the Deacons and a large number of the members of the church have decided to marry in the Church according to law.... I think it says a good deal for the Christian character of these people'⁶³²

It was this emphasis, on the European law, which the BaNgwato had found difficult to accept and rather offensive. During this period, the magistrate had become a partner with the missionaries in conducting marriages inside and outside the Church.⁶³³ In their U.D.C. Annual Meetings, of 1906, 1910 and 1916, the LMS missionaries in Bechuanaland had resolved to ask the Colonial Government to replace the African marriage laws with a 'known' European law. To facilitate such a process, they had suggested that the resident Magistrates of their various stations be requested to reduce charges paid in 'British Courts' in order to make it easy for their people to obtain marriage and divorce certificates. They also urged the government to introduce legislation making 'Native Marriages' illegal. They wanted this legislation to make sure that Christians could not to be married in 'Native Custom' and that 'marrying heathen by Christian rites' was not possible.⁶³⁴ These developments, together with the question of the Unification of Churches, began to make Jennings' position at Serowe very insecure.

5.7. Jennings' Removal Untenable

Jennings was accused of conspiracy against Khama's kingly position and of attempting to impose foreign political ideas. At the end of 1913 Khama, for instance, wrote to the LMS Foreign Secretary saying:

'I might mention here also that the present state of affairs in connection with the L.M.S. work amongst us is greatly to be deplored. Instead of advancing satisfactorily, as it did in early days, its work is, in our opinion, gradually slackening. Nearly all the early missionaries of the L.M.S. whom the Directors were good enough to send to labour among us, clearly understood the tenor of their mission; they were able and keen servants of God who aimed at nothing else but to serve Him and Him alone, and they were men who led an exemplary Christian life. But I regret to have to state here that we have at present no missionary of that type. Like Lloyd, Mr.Jennings is nothing such as we can call a missionary in the proper sense of the work, at least practically no missionary in Serowe. He is unfit for his work.

Therefore whilst considering the question of Mr.Lloyd's removal from Shoshong I should be very happy if you would bear this matter in mind.'⁶³⁵

⁶³². A.E.Jennings (Shoshong) to L.M.S., June16, 1904, SOAS: B64 F1.

⁶³³. A.E.Jennings (Shoshong) to L.M.S., March7, 1905, SOAS: B66 F1.

⁶³⁴. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., February2, 1906, SOAS: B67 F3; U.D.C. Meetings held at Inyati, April 18-30, 1910, SOAS: B72 F6; S.A.D.C., Annual Meeting, February 1916, held at Tiger Kloof, Neville Jones, Secretary, Hope Fountain, SOAS: B78 F1.

⁶³⁵. Khama (Serowe) to L.M.S., December23, SOAS: B75 F6.

In early 1914 Khama again told the Directors that his discontent with the missionaries did not affect his connection with the LMS saying:

'I have already written to you about the encroachment of strange denominations. This question is becoming high and I have already put it into the hands of the missionaries during their meeting in Serowe, and I believe Mr. Willoughby will let you know all about it. I have no wish to become a member of any other denomination, and I do not wish to go back on these words nor have I any wish to allow the denomination referred to remaining in my country.'⁶³⁶

When F.H. Hawkins visited Serowe in 1913 he found the situation critical. The missionaries were still being accused of trying to squeeze the Church into a union.⁶³⁷ During this visit he also attended to Lloyd's demanded removal.⁶³⁸ Hawkins' final conclusions on the conflict between the BaNgwato and the missionaries was interesting. He described them as follows:

'I formed the impression from my conversation with Khama that while he was undoubtedly friendly to the Society, he was not anxious that its influence in Serowe should become too strong. He is a very astute man. Although no one can doubt the sincerity of his Christian profession, and his attachment to the Church at Serowe, the predominant consideration with him is the strengthening of the position of his tribe. I think there can be no doubt that it is his desire to play the Society, the Government, and the traders off against each other with a view to the advancement of what he believes to be the best interests of the tribe.'⁶³⁹

On transferring Jennings, Hawkins told the former that Khama and his people demanded his removal. Although this was partly true, there was another bigger reason for this, which was Jennings' political activities which were at times in support of Khama and against the local Protectorate officials. In December 1907 Jennings had been very critical of Willoughby's disparaging remarks on the Ngwato aristocrats. The colonial administrators, were in turn critical of Jennings argument that imposition of foreign rule, supported by Willoughby, would hinder the growth of dignity and independence of thought in the Ngwato Church.⁶⁴⁰ The Assistant Commissioner for the Northern Protectorate, Major R.M.Daniel, also wanted Jennings to be removed and to be replaced by his own nominee, Haydon Lewis. However, Khama, who did not want the Society to have too much power over his people, (as shown in the above quotation) wanted Jennings' successor to be a really good man, fresh from Britain.

⁶³⁶. Khama (Serowe) to L.M.S., March 24, 1914, SOAS: B76 F2.

⁶³⁷. J.T.Brown (Kudumane) to L.M.S., January 31, 1913, SOAS: B74.

⁶³⁸. A.E.Jennings (Serowe), January 17, 1913, SOAS: B75.

⁶³⁹. N.Goodall, *op.cit.*, p.286.

⁶⁴⁰. London Missionary Society, Private and Confidential Reports: Reply by A.E.Jennings to W.C.Willoughby's Statement, *op cit.*

Missionaries who were already in the country were believed to be more or less bound to the political situation of the region.⁶⁴¹ He, therefore, hoped that a new man would have nothing to do with the affairs of the state. Instead, Hawkins promised a package deal of five missionaries, in order to make Serowe the centre of an intensive mission zone. But Khama deferred his decision on this matter. His final decision on this, demonstrated his political astuteness, described by Hawkins above, when he says that Khama always tried to create a balance by using the government, the society and the traders in the interest of his people.⁶⁴² Khama's response to Hawkins offer of the five missionaries: among whom were a medical doctor, a school master, to assist Ella Sharp who had been at Serowe since 1902, and two replacements for Jennings, being R.H.Lewis and G.C.H.Reed, was that he did not want to take any more missionaries.⁶⁴³ When pressed further he struck a compromise by accepting Lewis as a missionary at Serowe, while Reed was appointed to the Serowe's outstations. He however turned down the offer for a medical doctor and a male schoolmaster. With this arrangement, Khama believed that he could still advance the interests of his people, without either the government, the missionaries or the traders having too much influence. He feared that if one of the groups provided all these services they might become too strong, have too much influence over his people and eventually reduce his kingly power.⁶⁴⁴

5.8. Erection of the Serowe Church

The years following the settlement of the BaNgwato at Serowe were marked by a severe famine. This made it very difficult for the people to provide finance for the Church building and other public buildings. By 1907 however the BaNgwato had raised £2,400 plus Khama's personal contribution of about £1,000 for the cost of the Church building. In July of the same year, Jennings wrote saying:

'Khama has asked me to get him plans and estimates for building of the tribal Church at Serowe. A week or so ago I stayed a day or two at Tiger Kloof and it was while there and discussing the subject with Mr.Ballantyne that the proposal I am about to broach occurred to me.'⁶⁴⁵

He suggested that the Tiger Kloof Industrial School be transferred to Serowe for two years, to help to erect the proposed new Ngwato Church. The entire upkeep of that section of the school (food, clothing,

⁶⁴¹. Khama (Serowe) to L.M.S., March24, 1914, SOAS: B76.

⁶⁴². Also see Daniel, April24, 1913, B74.

⁶⁴³. Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., March30, 1914, SOAS: B76.

⁶⁴⁴. Major Daniel (Francistown) to L.M.S., April24, 1913, SOAS: B75; Khama (Serowe) to F.H.Hawkins (Tiger Kloof), March10, 1913, SOAS: B75.

⁶⁴⁵. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., July11, 1907, SOAS: B68 F4.

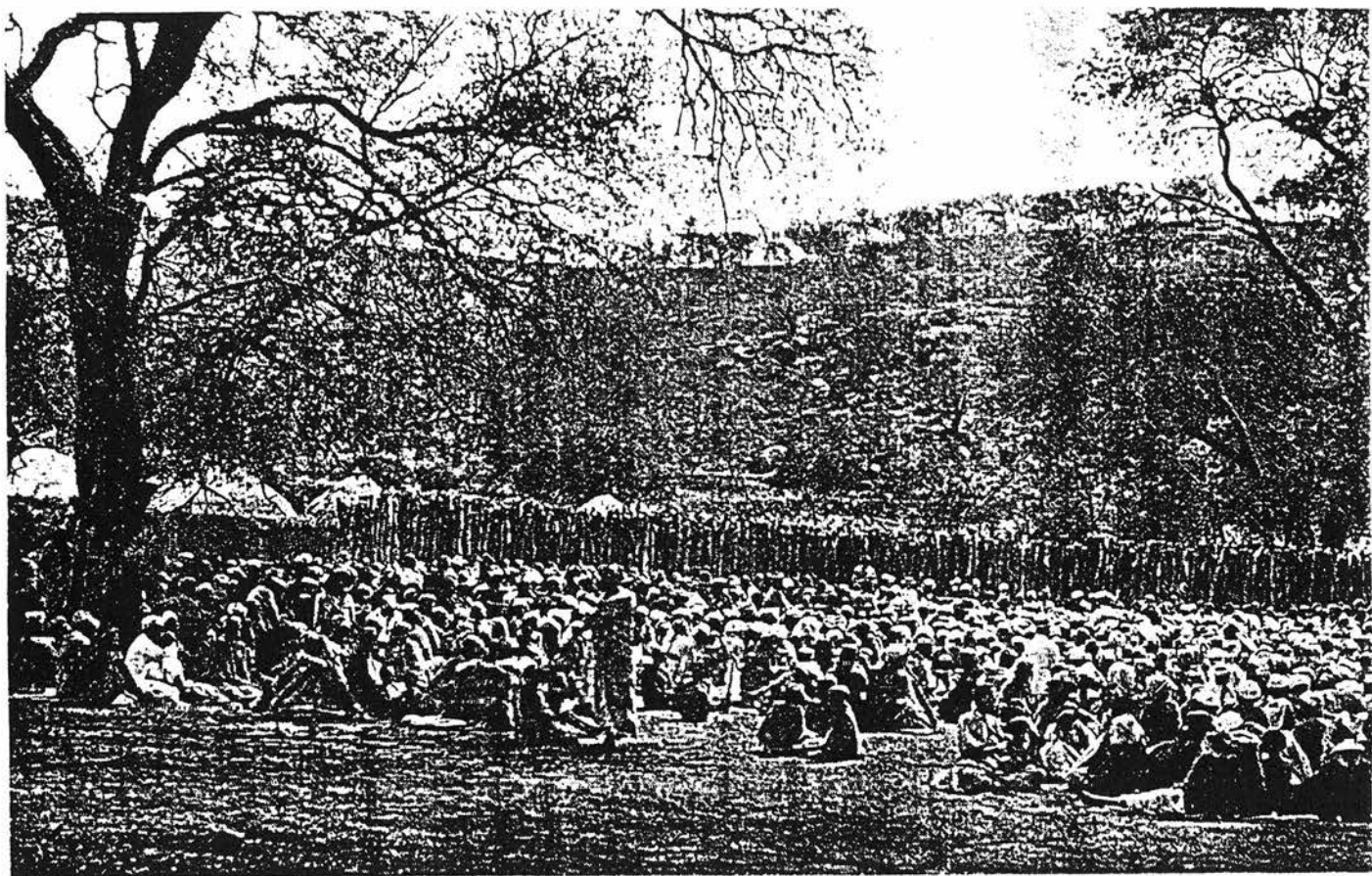


Photo by

A. E. Jenn

Fig.35

A Sunday Church service in the place of the tribal assembly. Over 2, 500 present. The new church was still under construction (J. Harris, (1922)).

accommodation) and the salaries of the instructors and a white qualified teacher, for their night school, was to be provided and paid for by the BaNgwato for two years. Jennings told the Directors that this was a magnificent opportunity to advertise the institution among the BaNgwato. Willoughby, seeing this as exploitation of the institution by the wealthiest mission station, opposed this suggestion.⁶⁴⁶

The planned new Church building at Serowe was intended to be a lasting monument. In July 1907 Jennings had got a Kimberley architect to supply plans and estimates, and he demanded enormous fees of up to £3,000. The BaNgwato therefore turned to the government's nominated constructor (J.Callaway of Mafeking) and architect (Wallace) to design and construct the building. The work then began and the laying of the foundation stone took place on 6 August 1912 and was carried out by Lt.Col.F.W.Panzer, the Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland Protectorate, with Khama and Jennings giving speeches. For his part, Khama was thankful that he could now die in peace knowing that the Cathedral had practically been built. He also pointed out that although Jennings and other missionaries could preach in it, because they were agents of the LMS, it was to be a tribal property.

The stone which makes no mention of the LMS reads thus:

This Church was erected to the Glory of God by Chief Khama and the Bamangwato tribe. This stone was laid by Lt. Col. F.W.Panzena C.M.S., the Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate on 6th August 1912.
J.Callaway (Builder, Mafeking) Wallace (Architect)

The question of the Church being a 'tribal' property worried Jennings. He tried to obtain the title deed for the LMS in vain. During the course of the erection of the building, Khama had, in fact, taken over the supervision of the work and demanded that the missionary gave him all the documents, financial statements and cash. Jennings blamed the anti-LMS party for it; while they accused him of maladministration. This remained a source of conflict between the LMS and Ngwato until 1915. In January 1912, Monageng, a prominent Church deacon, had told the magistrate and Jennings that:

'The new Church will be built and will be the property of the tribe. The missionary, Mr.Jennings, will preach in it, but it will be the property of the tribe.'⁶⁴⁷

Jennings continued to be worried by these statements. He wrote to the Directors saying:

'Anyhow temporarily and until Khama's death the anti-L.M.S. party has been "knocked out". They went so far last month as to bring a native minister from the colony - who of course came of his own accord just to see Khama; and then asked to be allowed to preach, and began collecting people at night times, etc. As soon as

⁶⁴⁶. 'The Principal Discusses the Prospects', *The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*, XLX, December 1907, p.227.

⁶⁴⁷. A.E.Jennings (Serowe), January 19, 1912, SOAS: B74.

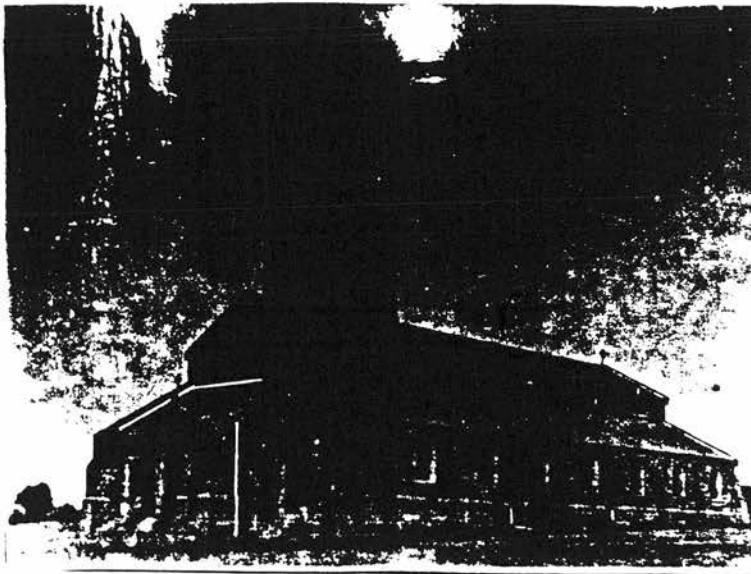


Fig.36

Serowe church and its opening by Khama and other LMS and colonial officials (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS).

Khama heard of this he gave him 24 hours to clear out of the town.⁶⁴⁸

At last the cathedral which cost £8,000 during its construction from 1911 - 1913 was opened on 9 June 1915. Up to 15,000 people attended, 200 to 300 of them being whites.⁶⁴⁹ But soon afterwards Khama bitterly complained of the bad workmanship of the contractors and intended to sue over the defects. In the meantime, Lewis appealed to the Directors to allow Mr. Ballantyne and the Tiger Kloof boys to carry out the necessary work to keep the building from collapsing.⁶⁵⁰

5.9. Celebrations of Khama's Jubilee

In March 1910 the Ngwato people, the Church and the missionaries were preparing for a huge thanksgiving celebration, on the occasion of Khama's Jubilee marking his fiftieth anniversary as a Christian. A prayer request for the occasion was inserted in the *Chronicle of the London Missionary Society*.

This event, of great 'tribal' and historical importance, was to be held at Serowe on 7-9 May. Khama had agreed to call in all the BaNgwato from the outlying districts. The Assistant Commissioner of the Protectorate, the local Magistrate and also the white inhabitants, were invited to take part in the celebrations.

Jennings looked forward to this occasion. He saw this as a splendid opportunity of pointing the 'heathen' population to the accruing advantage and benefits of Christianity, in a tangible form in the person of their own King. The celebrations were however deferred because of the death of King Edward VII and rescheduled for early 1911. Paying tribute to the late King, Khama reminded his people of the ongoing threats of the, then recently formed, Union of South Africa. He told them that he preferred to continue his connection with the British royalty. The actual celebration, which was attended by a deputation from London, took place in February 1911.⁶⁵¹ The response to Christianity was tremendous. There were over 100 new members to the Serowe Church.

In July 1922 another Jubilee was celebrated, to earmark Khama's fiftieth year of reign. The LMS again

⁶⁴⁸. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., August 10, 1912; SOAS: B74 F5.

⁶⁴⁹. R.H.Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., August 19, 1915, SOAS: B77.

⁶⁵⁰. R.H.Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., August 29, September 13, May 24, 1915, SOAS B77.

⁶⁵¹. Khama (Serowe) to L.M.S., February 18, 1911, SOAS: B73 F3 - laments his death.

used this as an advantage to strengthen their ties with the BaNgwato. Among the most distinguished guests, was Jennings, who participated in one of the afternoon Church services at the **Kgotla**. The celebration lasted for a week with 500 horsemen and 8,000 foot soldiers parading in their uniforms, for public entertainment, during that historic event. The activities of that event culminated in a Sunday service. Kgamane, who spoke for the nation, paid tribute to the missionaries for their immense political contribution and assistance to their King, who he said always ruled by means of the Church.⁶⁵²

This was Khama's last public opportunity to express his gratitude to the LMS (he died the following year in February 1923). He thanked God for the LMS and for their work in his territory. He also took this opportunity to give a moral lecture, saying:

'I, Khama, in the midst of this Kgotla today, wish to speak a few words to my own people the Bamangwato... if we continue in the service of God we shall be a nation still. But instead of that, unfortunately, we are now going back, because there are so many people who refuse to receive the word of God.... You know that the one thing which destroys our work, and is a great enemy to our work is drink. Intoxicating drink is a great chief in the country.'⁶⁵³

Khama concluded his address by saying:

'I pray that the Directors will continue their efforts to promote the spiritual and educational interests of my tribe in the future, to a larger scale.'⁶⁵⁴

Realising that he was now old, Khama had reconciled with his son Sekgoma, heir to the throne, after an estrangement of 25 years. Sekgoma, with his followers, who included a large number of Church members, deacons and young bright students, had decided to leave Palapye in 1899 and eventually settled in Lophephe in 1901. They were however subsequently removed by the government from Khama's country at Khama's request and resettled at Nekate, where Lloyd visited them in 1909. Lloyd said that he found Sekgoma's people under Chief Rauwe's influence, who together with his Khurutshe people had discarded the LMS in favour of the Anglicans. The implication of this worried the LMS because they feared that Sekgoma might introduce Anglicanism on becoming King. Lloyd, for instance, wrote:

'Mr.Helm in answer to mine - recently wrote to me that Mr.Cullen Reed visited Sekhome (sic) last year, when Sekhome and his people utterly, repudiated the L.M.S. both for the present and the future.... If ever Sekhome should come to Serowe as Chief, holding anti-L.M.S. views, it will be a sorry day for many, Sekhome included. I talked over the matter with Chief Khama. Baruti Kalaakgosi, a close friend of Sekhome's, but now living at Serowe, suggested that I should visit Sekhome....

⁶⁵². R.H. Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., July30, 1922, SOAS: B84.

⁶⁵³. *L.M.S. Chronicle*, 'Khama's Jubilee', Vol.76, No.900, July 1992, pp.92-4.

⁶⁵⁴. Ibid.

Sekhome's reason for objecting to our missionaries was that they were against him.⁶⁵⁵

After the Jubilee, the source of conflict with LMS resulted from the publication of the book entitled *Khama: The Great African Chief* by J.C.Harris, published for the LMS, in honour of Khama's Jubilee as King. It carried inflammatory statements about Sekgoma, and the Ratshosa family. The book described Sekgoma's character as weak and lacking in principle and moral fibre, while Simon Ratshosa was described as a brood. When Lewis told Khama of the remarks, about his sons and grandsons, he was very displeased. What annoyed Khama most was the fact that the book implied that after his death, his country was going to be incorporated into South Africa.⁶⁵⁶

The attack on these men, who were in the centre of the Ngwato Church and Khama's administration, threatened the future of the LMS work. Ratshosa demanded that J.C.Harris, who himself had never been to Southern Africa, should declare the names of his informants and that the missionaries should stop abusing his people and carry the Gospel of Christ on sound Christian basis. He also observed that while the missionaries despised and abused the role of kingship, the people of the world respected the interests of the King. Disputing the words in J.C.Harris' book as a 'gross fabrication entirely devoid of any foundation', he blamed the future downfall of the LMS, in Khama's territory, on the missionaries themselves.⁶⁵⁷ However Khama continued to have trust in the LMS Directors. In the midst of antipathy to the local LMS he was for instance most cordial to Sir Albert Spicer, one of the LMS Directors, recalling warmly his help in 1895 when he was in London.⁶⁵⁸ But Khama still fought against any attempt to deny his country economic, religious and political independence.

5.10. The Khama - Jousse Affair

In 1916 a severe conflict arose between Khama and Paul Jousse, the Manager of the Bechuanaland Trading Association Stores (B.T.A.). The problem began when Khama's application for a trading licence was granted by the Resident Magistrate at Serowe. Khama began his business by buying two stores originally owned by Messrs. Garret, Smith and Company and invited two white men to manage the stores. After six years of the business opening, it had developed successfully and was prospering. Jousse then protested, to the Resident Commissioner and High Commissioner, that a man of Khama's influence

⁶⁵⁵. E.Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., April4, 1909, SOAS: B71 F2.

⁶⁵⁶. Lewis, 'Report of the Serowe Mission, 1913', B4, *Mission Report, 1913-1919*.

⁶⁵⁷. S.Ratshosa (Serowe) to L.M.S., May15, 1923, SOAS: B85.

⁶⁵⁸. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., October29, 1907, SOAS: B68.

and status should not be allowed to possess commercial interests. He said that Khama's position as King was hindering fair competition and that he was already monopolising the clothing, wagon and cattle trade. Jousse further criticized the imperial government for leaving a country so large under the absolute role of Khama, which he said had retarded advance and also jeopardized the interests of Europeans. In his article, 'The Truth about King Khama', in the Johannesburg Sunday Times, he criticized Khama for his 'cunning' means in dealing with the B.S.A.C. and in rejecting incorporation into the South African Union. He further described the BaNgwato as immoral, witches, and murderers, which he said showed that Christianity had only minimal effects on the people.⁶⁵⁹ This attack on Khama was however motivated by Jousse's financial and political interest because of his connection with the B.T.A. and B.S.A.C., which had made claims over Bechuanaland.⁶⁶⁰

When the news of Paul Jousse's article reached Serowe, the BaNgwato boycotted the B.T.A. stores and demanded Jousse's resignation from the company, because of his disparaging remarks and abusive language against them. The High Commissioner, Glastone and the Resident Magistrate, Panzerra, in support of the B.T.A. stores, compelled Khama to withdraw his stores. R.H.Reed wrote that Khama responded saying:

'I am trading under a licence which the government hesitated about at the time but finally granted. I am exactly carrying out the terms laid down by the government at that time. The stores are conducted and managed wholly by Europeans. I have nothing to do with that part of them. If the government wished me not to trade on principle they should have said so then before I invested thousands of pounds in the work. Now it is for them to compensate me if they wish me to stop or prove I am breaking the terms of my licence.'⁶⁶¹

The government subsequently unjustly withdrew Khama's licence, without providing any compensation. In order to eliminate the missionary from Khama's affairs, the resident magistrate tried to influence the BaNgwato against Lewis, who was seen as the only European who could challenge that decision. R.H.Lewis had complained that traders did not like any fair competition because they wanted to monopolize trade and freely control prices.⁶⁶²

With Jousse's affair in mind, Khama realised that he could not afford to dispense with his old allies in London. On March 17, 1914 he therefore wrote to the Directors repeating his appreciation for their help

⁶⁵⁹. W.C.Willoughby (Molepolole) to L.M.S., April 25, 1916, SOAS: B76.

⁶⁶⁰. W.C.Willoughby (Vryburg) to L.M.S., March 26, 1914, SOAS: B76; March 21, 1916, B79.

⁶⁶¹. J.C.H.Reed (Serowe) to L.M.S., February 15, 1916, SOAS: B78.

⁶⁶². R.H.Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., April 4, 1916, SOAS: B78 F2.

during the 1895 London talks saying: '... it was impossible for him to forget such things.' He referred to the LMS as 'Our mother denomination', and repeated his intentions to remain a member, despite his discontent with the missionaries.⁶⁶³ This led to an improvement in relations between the BaNgwato and the LMS, while lack of trust for the government resulted, from their mishandling the Khama/Jousse affair as well as the building of the Serowe Church.

It is worthwhile also to mention that Khama hoped to control the prices of imported goods by trading. In the past a King, as custodian of the state, received from his people, such items as elephant tusks, ostrich feathers, skins, wildlife meat, cattle, corn etc. In times of famine he used these contributions to meet the needs of the hungry, the old, the poor and the disabled. Upon becoming a Christian King, Khama renounced the right to accept such tributes from his people and had to struggle for his own subsistence as well as for the needy in his territory, a matter unprecedented in the past. To be able to meet such needs he had begun the business in question. In that new economic changing world this helped him to purchase houses, wagons, ploughs, food, seeds, pay hut tax, pay school teachers and employ the boundary surveyors, etc.

For the rest of Khama's reign relations with LMS were warm, while the intentions of the Imperial government and its officials remained suspicious. However the LMS - congregational Church remained the state-Church until the 1950s, long after Khama's death.

5.11. Khama's Reign Ends

At the departure of Jennings, the Ngwato Church had developed to maintain dignity and independence of thought. Within this was a powerful pro-Anglican movement and anti-white feelings. In fact R.H.Lewis found that even within the Church members these feelings were ripe. The white man was seen as an alien and the Ngwato young men were anxious to obtain a good education in order to 'excel the Europeans in artfulness and cunning'.⁶⁶⁴

In terms of numbers, the Ngwato Church had grown immensely. When Willoughby left the Church roll numbered 293, all of them residing at Serowe, although hundreds of Church members had left Palapye due to Khama's decentralization programme after 1895 (See Chapter4). Jennings handed over to his successor 728 members at Serowe and 227 members in the five outlying Churches, making a total of

⁶⁶³. Khama (Serowe) to L.M.S., March17, 1914, SOAS: B76.

⁶⁶⁴. Lewis, 'Report of the Serowe Mission', 1916, L.M.S., B5, *Mission Reports, South Africa, 1913-1919*.



Fig.37

Khama after fifty years' rule (in 1922) (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS; also J. Harris, (1922), facing p.81).

955 members, not reckoning the members of the Church at Ngamiland, Selepeng and the Kalanga region. Besides these, there were 200 young converts at Serowe and 152 in the districts. This gives an estimation of over 1,307 avowed Christians in Khama's territory.

One of the major contributing factors to this increase in Church roll was Jennings' demand for what he called legal marriages. During his tenure of office, Jennings married no less than 665 couples at Serowe.⁶⁶⁵ This however left many genuine Christians, who were not married according to European law, unaccounted for.

In the period leading to the 1920s, the Ratshosa faction continued to influence Church-state affairs. This was particularly possible because of the influential positions these members were holding in the community. While Simon Ratshosa himself was the head of the public or **Kgotla** school at Palapye, his brother Johnnie was the government secretary and his son was Khama's secretary. Lewis in 1917 considered Simon to be the most dangerous and most anti-LMS ever. He wrote saying:

'... for we are up against a generation of native, revered with education, hating white men and destitute of moral principles. This section of native life is gaining in influence both in the tribal and Church life, where they badly override the whitebeards, with what they call the wisdom of the white men... the section of the Ratshosa family have been and ever will be a thorn in the side of the L.M.S.'⁶⁶⁶

Although relations between Lewis and Khama were mostly cordial the missionary deplored the King's weakness in allowing family squabbles to affect his judgement.⁶⁶⁷ Khama was now getting too old and needed the support of his royal family in running the affairs of the state. In 1916 he had been kicked by a horse, as he rode around the town, and took several months to recover from the wounds he sustained.⁶⁶⁸ Early in February 1923 Khama had contracted pneumonia, after taking an early morning horse ride, from which he never recovered. The three doctors attending him spoke of his abhorrence for alcohol saying:

'He absolutely refuses all alcoholic stimulants, but is otherwise amenable to all forms of stimulants.'⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁵. A.E.Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., March 31, 1914, SOAS: B76 F2.

⁶⁶⁶. C.H.Lewis, 'Report of the Serowe Mission, 1917', L.M.S., B5, *Mission Reports, South Africa, 1913-1919*.

⁶⁶⁷. C.H.Lewis, 'Report of the Serowe Mission, 1920', L.M.S., B6, *Mission Reports, South Africa, 1920-1926*; also Lewis, February 17, 1920, B83.

⁶⁶⁸. J. Ratshosa, *My Book ...*, p.202.

⁶⁶⁹. B.N.A., No. J.127, S4/1, Dr. Mackae and others in J.C. Macgregor to H.C. 24 vols., 1923 as quoted in J.M.Chirenji, (1978), *op.cit.*, p.105.

Of the last moments of Khama's life, R.H. Lewis wrote saying:

'Miss Sharp assisted Semane to nurse the Chief during the night, and when I arrived at 7.30 Wednesday morning she had already gone home, and as I entered I knew at once that the last moments on earth of our old friend had already arrived. We all knelt in prayer and I held the almost lifeless hand of the old Chief, and before our prayer was finished the end came and he passed out from our midst with just a deep sigh and a tremor to mark the moment of his farewell.'⁶⁷⁰

This was on 21st February 1923. The funeral was held on 22 February 1923. Sekgoma preferred his father to be given a Christian rather than traditional burial, saying:

'My father was a Christian, and it is only fitting that we should take him to the House of God for a memorial service first, and then go to the Kgotla.'⁶⁷¹

5.12. Summary

Khama had a long reign and experience. Having been born about 1835 he had experienced the violent dispersions (known as Mfecane) which swept Southern Africa in the early nineteenth century, the missionary advent, European imperialism and British rule etc. In all these, as we have seen, Khama tried to function as both a MoNgwato and a Christian King. Christianity for Khama, had to be adopted or to be lived within the existing customs of the people. It also had to unite rather than divide the Ngwato people. The uniting symbol of Christianity and other spheres of life had always to be seen within the context of the kingly role and function.

Like their father, Sekgoma and Tshekedi, Khama's successors always tried to use Christianity to unite the BaNgwato against external forces. In this they combined the use of LMS who were seen as useful in critical periods, and the British rule, which guaranteed some measure of protection. Despite these similarities, the privileges of the LMS as a sole Society, monopolizing the Ngwato state, were quickly disappearing, although the Church-state relationship lasted much longer.

One other major observation is that even in 1920s, the LMS mission had failed to welcome the Ngwato church into partnership in the task of evangelizing the region. This failure to recognise Ngwato insights, resources and methodologies, which could have enriched the whole missionary enterprise, was in spite of the fact that much of the work, heavily depended on local personnel and finance. Partnership had the potential to lead to an effective evangelization, because the local Christians could enter areas which were accessible to few European missionaries. The crucial factor about partnership is that it would have also led to significant new step forward, especially if the local church was seen as the sending and

⁶⁷⁰. R.H.Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., February 23, 1923, SOAS: B85.

⁶⁷¹. E. Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., February 23, 1923, SOAS: B85.

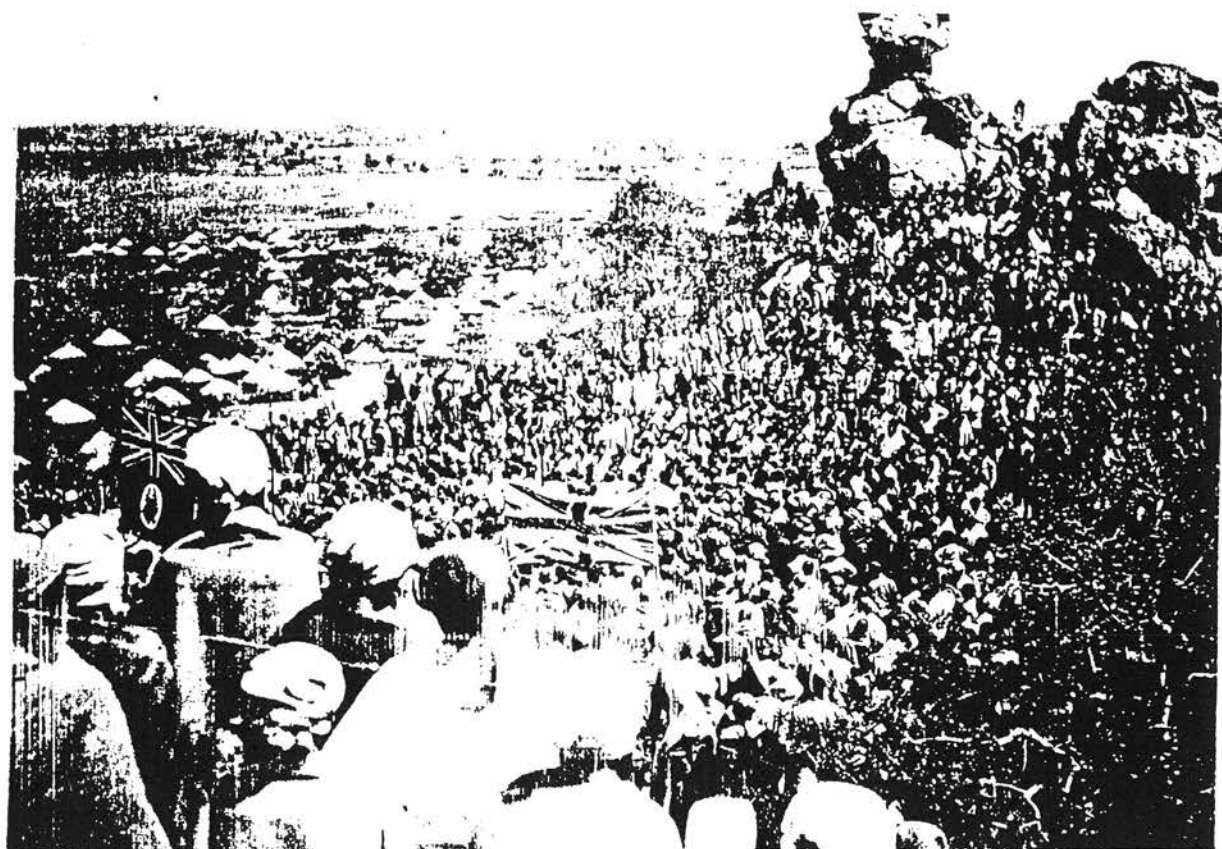


Fig.38

At Khama's funeral. (From The Botswana National Archives and Records,
No. Illus. 538).

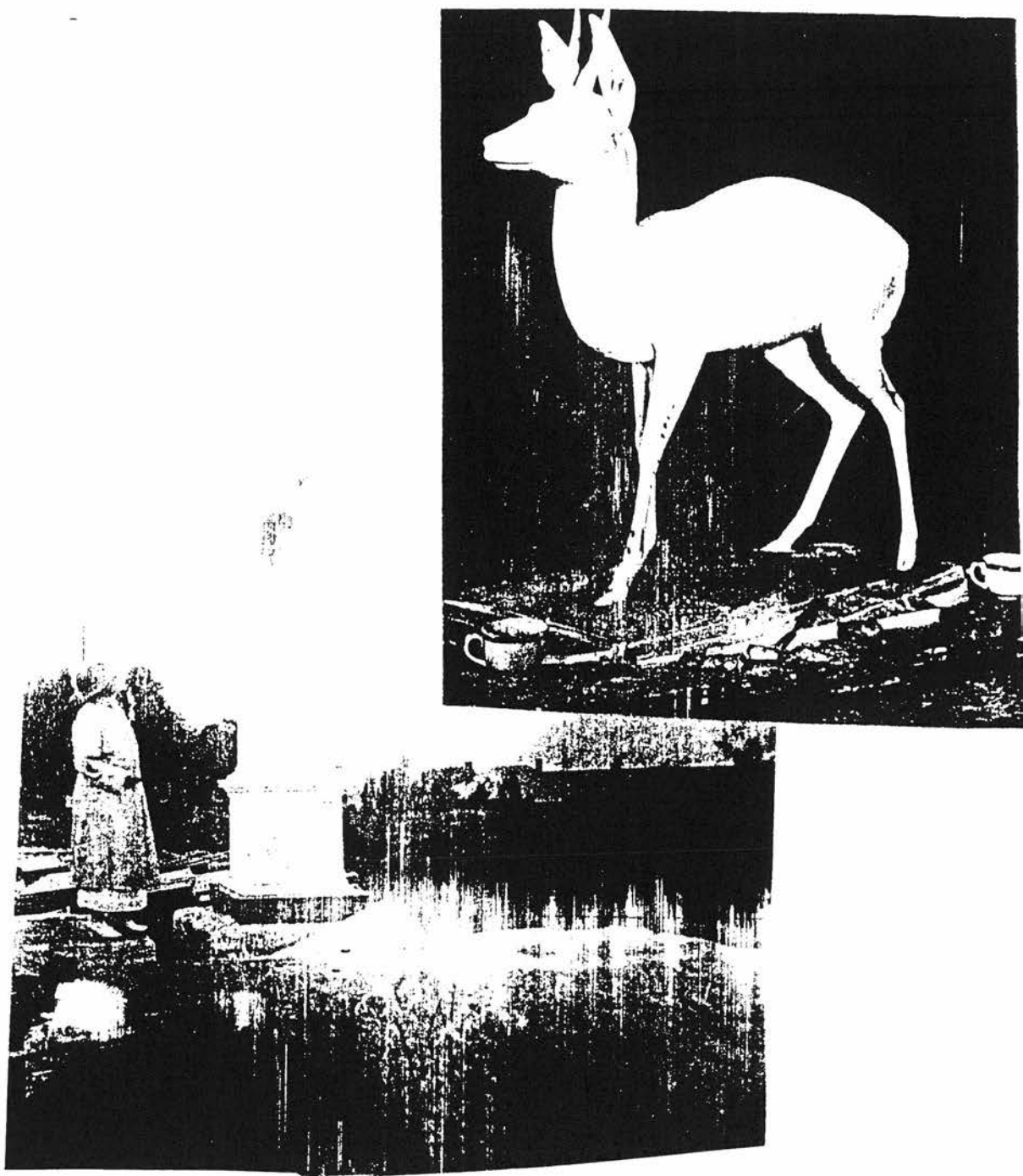


Fig.39
Photograph of the Duiker for the Khama memorial. Carved by
Gordon Leith (The Botswana National Archives and Records
Services, No. D.C.S. 2/19).



Fig.40

A bust of King Khama by the South African sculptor Anton van Wouw.
(Mckford (1950), facing p.72).

support base for mission. This study has observed that the activities of some of these local evangelists and their simple Christian lifestyle at a cultural level was attractive to ordinary people. It also served to correct the perception that Christianity was a European religion, inseparably bound up with Western culture and the perception that for someone to be a Christian had to necessarily reject his or her own cultural heritage.

One of the most dominant features of Ngwato Christianity, after the death of Khama, was the involvement of women in public affairs. The last two chapters trace this shift, from the time when women were marginalised as far as public life is concerned to the twentieth century, when they began to play a vital role in Ngwato society.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0. Ngwato Tradition, Women and Christianity

6.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to identify some major historical processes, which variously affected gender relationships. This is considered in three ways: firstly by identifying the underlying major socio-economic and political structures which seem to have discriminated against women.⁶⁷² The **badimo**, ancestral spirits, were for instance identified in particular ways. They were seen as dominant and had implacable sources of power over laws and customs. This did not only subordinate women or see them as 'inferior', but also gave divine justification to male superiority and created a complex world view which was, invariably conceived, in terms of 'the powerful' and 'superior' males.⁶⁷³ These social processes seriously affected gender identity, with the women's position clearly weakened, and dominated.

Secondly, I will illustrate how the Tswana view of male superiority versus female inferiority was supported and perpetuated by missionary notions of a male dominated Christianity.⁶⁷⁴ These notions therefore found resonance within the Ngwato law, customs and beliefs.

Thirdly, and lastly, I will assess the response of the Ngwato women to Christianity and the fact that the attempt to indigenise made it very difficult to eliminate past disparaging views about them.

The historical contribution and response of women to Christianity is, in fact, not given much attention in missionary literature.⁶⁷⁵ Whenever they used the term 'natives' it predominantly referred to

⁶⁷². Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.67 gives examples of this.

⁶⁷³. Sekgoma believed that Ngwato customs, and laws were directly given by **badimo**. Mackenzie, J., (1871) p.397.

⁶⁷⁴. Mackenzie, J., (1871) Chp. 18: A Chapter of Bamangwato History. It traces the Ngwato tradition which simply preserves the names of prominent Kings and their ideas. There is no single mention of the role of women.

⁶⁷⁵. J.D. Hepburn, 1895; J. Mackenzie, 1871; Robert Moffat, 1842; David Livingstone, 1857 etc; Lloyd, 1895; Richard Lovett, 1895; du Plessis, J. 1911; Goodall, N., 1945; Burns, J.H.L., 1962; Campbell, J., 1815 etc.

men.⁶⁷⁶ Although in some instances the missionaries realised that women were being marginalised from Christian activities, they did not address such issues in their missionary debates. Like the missionary literature, the modern nationalist historiography⁶⁷⁷ justified as it may be largely concerns itself with imperialistic effects of missions, and ignores the role played by women in history. Despite this picture, the early years of the twentieth century saw women beginning to respond to some of these hinderance which faced them traditionally. They began to find Christian modes of thought and expression relevant to their life situations. To show how this development took place I will describe an overview of the position of women within the Ngwato tradition and the impact of Christianity.

6.2. Background: the Pre-Christian Experience.

Traditionally, women were generally accepted to be inferior and without respect. At social gatherings and feasts this was clearly evident, because men and females sat apart. Certain spots such as the **Kgotla** were normally reserved for men. These traditional distinctions were many. In the sphere of economic production, there was also a well defined division of labour, with tasks traditionally allotted according to sex. Feminine tasks were perpetually treated as inferior to those of their male counterparts. Politically, women were excluded from the debates or of holding political functions and offices, just as they were debarred from officiating at religious ceremonies. **Bongaka** (medicine), like **bogosi** (kingship), was essentially a male occupation. Legally, customs of inheritance, **bogadi** (bride-wealth), marriages and divorce etc, all discriminated against women. As we will find out in the ongoing pages, acquisition and ownership of property, like the institutions of kingship and **Kgotla** were predominantly a patrilineal affair. Daughters, sisters and wives were, therefore, historically and traditionally excluded from any form of inheritance, which kept them economically dependent.

Robert Moffat, outlined this cultural position of women by saying:

‘While going to war, hunting, watching the cattle, milking the cows, and preparing their furs and skins for mantles, was the work of the men, the women had by far the heavier task of agriculture, building the houses, fencing, bringing firewood, and heavier than all, the natures charge, the rearing of a family.

The greater part of the year they are constantly employed; and during the season of picking and sowing their gardens, their task is galling, living on a coarse, scanty fare, and frequently having babe fostered to their backs, while thus cultivating the ground. The men for obvious reasons, found it convenient to have a number of such vassals,

⁶⁷⁶. John Mackenzie, (1871) p. 348 says ‘soon after my arrival (at Shoshong) ... I availed myself of the custom of the natives, and asked the chief to point out where I might build, which he was very willing to do.’ The allocation of land and its legislation was a sole responsibility of men. In p. 369 when referring to hunters and cattle herdsmen he uses the word ‘natives’ over and over again.

⁶⁷⁷. Chirenji, J.H., 1977, 1978; Dachs, A.J., 1971, 1974; Parsons, Q.N., 1972; Tlou T., 1985; Benson, M., 1960 etc.

rather than only one, while the woman would be perfectly amazed at one's ignorance, were she to be told that she would be much happier in a single state, or widowhood, than being the mere concubine and drudge of a haughty husband, who spent the greater part of his life in lounging the shade, while she was compelled, for his comfort as well as her own, to labour under the rays of an almost vertical sun, in a hot and withering climate. Their houses, which require considerable ingenuity as well as hard labour, are entirely the work of the women, who are extremely thankful to carry home even the heavier timbers, if their husbands will take their axes and fell them in their thicket, which may be many miles distant. The centre of the conical roof will, in many houses, be eighteen feet high, and it requires no little climbing, in the absence of ladders, for females to climb such a height; but the men pass and repass, and look on with the most perfect indifference, while it never enters their heads that their wife, their daughter or their mother may fall and break a leg or neck.

While standing near the wife of one the *grande*s, who, with some female companions, was building a house and making preparations to scramble by means of a branch on to the roof, I remarked that they ought to get their husbands to do that part of the work. This set all into a roar of laughter.... and several of the men drawing near to ascertain the cause of the merriment, the wives repeated my strange, and, to them, ludicrous proposal, when another peal of mirth ensued. Mahuto, who was a sensible and shrewd woman, stated that the plan, though hopeless, was a good one, It was reasonable that women should attend to household affairs and the light parts of labour, while man, wont to boast of his superior strength, should employ his energy in more laborious occupations; adding she wished I would give their husbands medicine to make them do the work.⁶⁷⁸

While women exercised some amount of authority in household affairs, the family institution generally shows the dominance of the male cultures.

i). The Family Life

The family leadership was patriarchal in nature and practice. This male headship or guardianship was viewed as divinely inspired and natural. In a polygamous household, for instance, wives were ranked in order of betrothal. With the wife chosen first regarded as senior wife, her eldest son automatically became heir to their fathers status and property.

Patriarchal leadership was also evident in an extended family set up, which was led by the eldest male member of the household. It was under the leadership of this male elder, supported by other men, that family functions such as marriage negotiations and other discussions and domestic events were organised and carried out.

⁶⁷⁸. Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, pp.66-7.

ii). Residential Structure

The residential pattern also promoted patriachalism in that the tradition demanded that sons establish their homesteads in their father's ward. It was therefore a traditional expectation that women left their father's ward or village following marriage, to live in their husband's home. Furthermore, the marriage arrangement was not only patrilocal but customarily embracing patriarchal heads with immense administrative authority over women. As part of this process, taking matrilocal residence after marriage was strongly disapproved, by attaching to it a social stigma of man's weakness or his being 'owned'.⁶⁷⁹ In this patrilocal system, families were also traced through fathers alone. Families with the matrilocal residence were ignored.⁶⁸⁰ The allotment of private land, for residence and cultivation, only rested with patriarchal household head.

iii). Marriage Formation

The choice for the man's first wife was a male dominated affair, because marriage was seen as a means of continuing the patriarchal lineage. The most important function for a wife thus became child-bearing,⁶⁸¹ in which the production of boys became a crucial matter.

No - one was excused from getting married. Every father expected his son to continue his family lineage.⁶⁸² A woman who deliberately choose to remain single, was not only virtually unknown, but was an embarrassment, and a shame to the community. In doing this, she should be refusing to fulfil that fundamental 'duty' of child-bearing. It was for this reason that the 'old maids', the unmarried old females, were known as **mafetwa** (those who have been passed by). This was the worst social stigma, to be associated with.

The embarrassment of a woman remaining under her parental authority, therefore, gave marriage an enhanced social value. A woman therefore desired to get married so as to become a mistress of her own households, and also to bear children for her husband without any disgrace.

In matters of authority too, a woman had to submit, either to her household head, normally the father

⁶⁷⁹. Schapera, I., (1956) *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, chp. xvi; Roberts, S., (1972) *Restatement of African Law: 5, Botswana 1, Tswana Family*, p.16.

⁶⁸⁰. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) *op cit*, p.382.

⁶⁸¹. Brown, T., (1926), *Among the Bantu Nomads: a record of forty years spent among the Bechuana*, pp.58-65. Also W.C. Willoughby, (1923), *Race Problems in the New Africa*, pp.46-138.

⁶⁸². Schapera, I., 1956. *op cit*, pp.28-9.

or came under the direct authority of her husband or any other family heads, depending on circumstances. So whether they got married or stayed single - their status remained unchanged; they did not have the right to make their own independent choices.

iv). Betrothal Negotiations

Traditionally the choice for the bride and all the betrothal arrangements rested with the man's parents, especially the uncle and father. The consent of the girl was taken for granted, which undermined the status of a woman.⁶⁸³ The agreement between the two families was a legal guarantee for the marriage. John MacKenzie tells us how Sekgoma, in 1857, had arranged a wife for Khama, saying:

'Before his banishment, Sekhome (sic) had desired his eldest son [Khama III] to take to wife a daughter of Pelutona;'⁶⁸⁴

This system was of considerable political significance. Through this Sekgoma wanted to create strong ties with his political allies such as Pelutona, a prominent headman and **ngaka**. Regarding this, Eugene Casalis, a French missionary among the BaSotho also wrote, saying:

'The marriage of all the wives is contracted in a similar manner; but a very marked distinction exists between the first and those who succeed her. The choice of the great wife (as she is always called) is generally made by the father, and is an event in which all the relations are interested.'⁶⁸⁵

The preliminary negotiations and agreements meant that the prospective husband had the right to freely visit the woman's home and cohabit with her. This had serious implications if the man decided to terminate the relationship at this stage, when he had borne children by her. The Tswana law only demanded that he paid compensation for the spoilt marriage prospects and maintenance of the child. This however amounted to about six head of cattle.⁶⁸⁶ If the relationship had been ended by her death, her place was, at times, taken by her own younger sister or another relative, especially, if **bogadi** had been given.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸³. The arrangement led to a substantial proportion of women marrying at an early age -say 16 - 19 years. It was culturally shameful for a woman to stay unmarried for a long time. Choosing and arranging wives for sons, ensured they married from good families, which meant stable marriages.

⁶⁸⁴. Mackenzie, J., 1922. op cit, p.109.

⁶⁸⁵. Casalis, E., (1861) The basuto, pp.186-7.

⁶⁸⁶. 'To Marry - or Not to Marry: Marital Strategies and Sexual Relations in a Tswana Society', in *Ethnos*, Vol.No, pp.7-28, by O. Gulbrandsen.

⁶⁸⁷. Roberts, S., (1972), op cit, pp.42-3;

While the impregnation of an unmarried woman, by a man other than one betrothed to her, generally resulted in the termination of marriage agreements, a man impregnating a woman did not necessarily suffer the same fate. For a woman this had a lasting, shameful social stigma. This state of affairs also jeopardized the whole family name, and drastically affected the single women of that household. The woman further became the victim of the tradition which stated that the father had a legal claim over her children. This was justified on economic grounds because the woman had no resources of her own.⁶⁸⁸ The term used for a woman who, for one reason or another, could not get married while engaging in marital affairs with a married was known as **bonyatsi**.⁶⁸⁹ This practice which mostly affected unmarried women, especially **mafetwa**, divorcees, and widows, continued to undermine the status of a woman because she was traditionally deprived of economic resources. The **bonyatsi** system entailed a flow of gifts from a man to reciprocate his **nyatsi**'s 'hospitality'. She would have looked to him for help with the building of a house or the provision of psychological security and spiritual needs, in addition to the economic benefits.⁶⁹⁰ The alternative was to turn to her father's household for these needs. While it was a supportive relationship, it tied the woman to that patriarchal economic power, influence and identity.

Despite such immense pressures and disadvantages, the traditional system made it very difficult for women to revolt. Some of the historic factors which maintained the status quo are as follows:

v). Initiation Ceremonies

Initiation rites, known as **bojale** (for girls) and **bogwera** (for boys), were further basis for social gender distinctions. G.M. Setiloane pointed out that:

'Active participation in ritual introduces them to the basic values of their society and to correct emotional attitudes to animals and crops.'⁶⁹¹

This practice had serious implications on women because it was one of the processes through which the society conferred upon its members a distinct social status, which however meant different things for women and men. While the '**mephato**' (regiments) separate youths from the life of childhood and promote them to the threshold of adulthood, it does so within certain gender parameters. It emotionally

⁶⁸⁸. See the ongoing pages for the mechanism.

⁶⁸⁹. Cohabiting with a married man who did not take up permanent joint residence with her. See Schapera, I., (1971) op cit, p.182; Gulbrandsen, O., *Ethnos*, Vol.51, No.1, p.11.

⁶⁹⁰. The phrase used was **sereti sa motse**, referring to the elevated position/status a man's presence brought to a home.

⁶⁹¹Setiloane, G.M., (1975), *The Image of God Among the Sotho Tswana*, p.35.

moulds and conditions them according to the laid cultural patterns. This not only subsequently subordinate women, but also strengthens the authority of the patriarchal leadership by imparting social values. What this also meant for the male was that, it introduced them to the supreme right of adult males, who alone could communicate directly with **badimo**, whose role was an integral part in the people's lives.⁶⁹² This gender distinction therefore promoted male superiority. W.C. Willoughby, wrote:

'... agriculture is peculiarly woman's domain: girls pass into womanhood by rites which centre round the fertility of the soil; women vaunt their devotion to tillage; men, when they work upon the land, profess to be helping their women-folk. Cattle, on the other hand, are associated with manliness, glory, and political power.... Boy's puberty rites are shot through and through with the care and defence of cattle; ... and even chiefs boast of their skill in herding; while women are debarred from milking cows or even entering a cattle-pen.'⁶⁹³

It was at the age of puberty that a youth underwent such educational training and only after this procedure had been successfully completed could marriage become a possibility. It was impossible, or rather unheard of, for parents to present or allow their son to marry a girl who had not undergone such a practice. In fact uninitiated men and women were despised as incomplete. Such people could not marry nor partake in the councils of men and women because they were still 'children' and 'unfit' for such activities.⁶⁹⁴ Robert Moffat pointed out that children born out of such parents could not be heirs to regal power.⁶⁹⁵ John MacKenzie, after his ten years of missionary labour among the BaNgwato, having carefully studied their culture, also tells us about such a condition, saying:

'No single ceremony has a wider significance; it may be said to introduce the youth to heathen manhood, with all its duties and responsibilities. No honourable marriage could take place with a man who had not gone through the 'boguera' or initial ceremony.'⁶⁹⁶

MacKenzie's observation were substantiated by Robert Moffat, who, while very unsympathetic towards the Tswana culture, saw a strong relationship between these initiation practices and the impact of marriage on women:

'Their youth, for instance, would forfeit anything rather than go uncircumcised. This national ceremony is performed from the age of eight to fourteen, and even to manhood, though the children born previous to their parents being initiated cannot be heirs to regal power. There is much feasting and dancing on the occasion, and every

⁶⁹²Ibid, p.38.

⁶⁹³. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, p.200.

⁶⁹⁴Setiloane, G.M., (1975) op cit, p.38.

⁶⁹⁵Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.250.

⁶⁹⁶. Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp. 375-6.

heart is elated at these festivities. The females have also their boyali at the same age, in which they are under the tuition of matrons, and initiated into all the duties of wives in which it merits notice that passive obedience is especially inculcated.⁶⁹⁷

In the **bojale** training sessions, as Moffat points out, girls were equipped for those roles which the culture regarded as feminine, such as household duties, or for what it deemed as womanhood in general. It is worth noting that there is an obvious and deliberate gender differentiation in the instructions given to boys and girls right from the time of birth. The care and training of the compound children, for instance, made a clear social distinction as to the status of boys and girls from their birth. G.M. Setiloane clearly stated this saying:

‘But as the child grows, the role of its parents, as formers of character and as disciplinarians, increases. There is an intense concern for educating the young in the ways of their ancestors, that they also may transmit the same ways to their descendants. Jealously watched by ‘badimo’ and undertaken out of love for the child and for its ultimate welfare, this is the duty of every parent. There is little systematic teaching. Under parental supervision, education takes place, ... through association with other children. Together, boys herd the sheep and goats and, later, the cattle; and girls fetch water and take charge of their younger simblings.’⁶⁹⁸

The birth of a boy, especially a first born, usually brought great excitement to the family and relatives. The family ancestors, who were seen to be special guardians, were also believed to favour sons. The birth of a boy was important because they were essential for the continuity of the patriarchal lineage. It was in the interest of the **badimo** to make their presence felt on their descendants. This was the reason why a wife who gave birth to sons was favoured, whereas the one who failed to do so, made the marriage of a second wife necessary.⁶⁹⁹

It was part of the essential tradition, therefore, that gender distinctions were instilled in the minds of the youth. The Setswana proverbial sayings, ‘**Lore lo ojwa lo sale metsi**’ (its better to bend a twig when its still fresh before it becomes dry and easily breakable) and a host of many other ‘wise’ sayings, typically argued for the necessity of ‘correct’ or ‘appropriate gender’, being values systematically transmitted to the children. This custom ensured that boys and girls began to behave as their ‘fathers’ and ‘mothers’ respectively. Boys, for instance, began to do such things as cattle herding at an early age, while girls specialised in learning household and agricultural activities, such as fetching water and firewood, stamping corn, preparing food, sweeping out the huts and nursing babies.⁷⁰⁰ Feminine

⁶⁹⁷. Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.66.

⁶⁹⁸Setiloane, G.M., (1842) op cit, p.35.

⁶⁹⁹. See the discussion on polygamous marriages below.

⁷⁰⁰. Willoughby, W.C., (1909) pp.228-45.

training and qualities subjected women to the home and household duties and dealt with values which subordinated women, and denied them any political and religious status. Moffat for instance wrote:

‘They have reached nearly to a climax in their life, for they expected soon to be married, and to be a mother they considered the chief end of a woman’s existence.’⁷⁰¹

Bogwera on the contrary was a symbol of masculinity. This is why male activities and their version of education, were seen to be prestigious. In addition to the practical education offered by the **bogwera** schools, the boys were introduced to what was seen as male status, such as the tribal laws and traditions, decision-making procedures and political and administrative matters, at both family and national level.⁷⁰² Boys were also equipped with the necessary skills enabling them to cope with military combats courageously. This cultural expectation of masculinity for men and femininity for women was acknowledged by Robert Moffat who wrote saying:

‘It seemed impossible for men to yield. There were several instance of wounded men being surrounded by fifty Bechuanas, but it was not till life was almost extinct that a single one would allow himself to be conquered. I saw more than one instances of a man fighting boldly, with ten or twenty spears and arrows fixed in his body The men struggling with death, would raise themselves from the ground, and discharge their weapons at any one of our number within their reach: their hostile and revengeful spirit only ceased when life was extinct.’⁷⁰³

In spite of all the bias preparations and training given in favour of men, women were unfairly accused of cowardice. For instance Moffat wrote:

‘... instead of flying, generally sat down and , baring their bosoms, exclaimed, ‘I am a woman, I am a woman.’⁷⁰⁴

This assertion by the missionary reflects his value judgements and needs considerable modification, because this sort of reaction was expected, bearing in mind the nature of training which had been given to these women.

One other male activity, which was seen to be a significant source of food supply, wealth and superiority, was hunting. Large hunts were organised at key moments in the life cycle of the society. This was, for example, the case when a special animal was required for ritual purposes such as rainmaking, or to acquire certain special animal materials associated with kingship. A leopard skin, for

⁷⁰¹. Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, pp.361-2.

⁷⁰². Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.375-9.

⁷⁰³. Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.362.

⁷⁰⁴. Ibid, pp.361-2.

instance, was either used as an insignia for kingly political status and authority or associated with special costumes for the **bogwera** and **bojale** initiates.

Cattle breeding and herding were also a crucial male activity because of the higher social status attached to that industry. The importance given to this contributed to the high value given to the birth of boys than girls. This was because cattle herds belonging to families without boys tended to decline due to lack of proper management. The livestock industry, itself, especially cattle, was not only important for economic purposes, but also for its marital and social value and rain-making ceremonial (religious) functions. In addition to this, cattle were an important source of food and provided meat, milk, and leather products which were an essential part of the people's diet and clothing. It was for this reason that cattle became a symbol of social power. This, enabled a man with cattle to acquire as many wives as he could economically support. As a result, cattle related activities were superior to food gathering and cooking, which were generally feminine activities and seen as inferior. Other areas treated as feminine duties were hoeing, reaping, and weeding as well as the gathering of some bush food, like the berries (**moretlwa**, *grewia flava*) which were often used for making traditional beer (called **khadi**) and other roots which supplemented their normal daily diets. In 1896, when the BaNgwato were poverty stricken, due to drought and rinderpest, the Ngwato women spent most of their days digging roots of the Motlhopi, while, men tried hard to serve their cattle.⁷⁰⁵ These female roles, historically, remained inferior activities. Regarding this trend, Adam Kuper has observed that:

‘Gathering, a female activity, was devalued as a source of food - it was the resource of the pauper. Women had to gather firewood, however, and indeed the wife's duty to provide firewood was stressed in wedding ceremonies.’⁷⁰⁶

The exclusion of women from certain economic activities such as hunting, ownership of cattle, etc, systematically continued to strengthen the traditional position of men. In fact the traditional structures, as a whole, contributed to the social status and promoted patriarchal superiority. Acquisition of cattle, which was itself closely associated with wealth and dignity, subsequently enabled men to marry many wives which increased their chances of having more children, especially the seriously needed sons.

Another factor which perpetuated the social status of men was the availability of the **bogadi** practice.

⁷⁰⁵. W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October 12, 18, 1896, S.O.A.S: B53 JB.

⁷⁰⁶. Kuper, A., (1982), *Wives for Wives Cattle: Bridewealth and Marriage in Southern Africa*, p.13.

vi). **Bogadi Practice (Bride Wealth)**⁷⁰⁷

Exchange of **bogadi** was an imperative requirement, legalising conjugal unions. This essential mandate demanded that the **bogadi** cattle were transferred from the bridegroom's family to the bride's before the feasts, marking the women's relocation to the husband's home, took place.

The institution explains why cattle breeding was entirely a crucial male activity. Its (ie **bogadi**) largest contributors were the, son's father, and his uncle, while the major benefactors, among the woman's family, were the maternal uncle and the brothers. This factor sustained their economic strength, the benefit of which was inherited by their sons.

Whilst young cows or oxen were usually given, bulls were never given, because they, possibly symbolised male strength. Cows were preferred because they were thought to symbolise the productive power expected from the woman. The handing over of **bogadi** was done before sunrise. The bridegroom, demonstrating his manhood, drove the cattle to the kraal of his in-laws and remained at the entrance of the kraal, while negotiations went on at the **Kgotla**. Negotiations took place here as opposed to the house, which was a symbol of feminine sphere occupied by the woman.

The transfer of **bogadi** gave man considerable power and control over a woman. It gave him the legal right to chastise her freely, whenever she failed to fulfil her traditional obligations. Wives, however, could however not do likewise. It also transferred the woman's legal productive powers to her husband's family, and limited the rights of the woman over her children, when the marriage ended by death or divorce.

Notwithstanding the fact that the society provided protective measures against abuse and legal channels which meant she could appeal to her in laws in the event of a dispute, could not withdraw from her marital obligations; she could not refuse conjugal relations, nor could she fail to prepare food for her husband. While the consequences of a woman found guilty of this had serious repercussions, which included the loss of custody over her children, the punishment of a guilty husband for a similar offence, was always light in comparison.⁷⁰⁸

Another way in which the **bogadi** practice facilitated men's economic prosperity, while depressing women's, was the fact that a man could acquire a wife with cattle he had received from the marriage

⁷⁰⁷. Marriage gifts given by the man's parents as a gratitude to the woman's parents for their kindness in giving their daughter in marriage and for the many years of parental care and upbringing. See Setiloane, G.M., (1975) op cit, p.30.

⁷⁰⁸. Schapera, I., *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, p.170. Also see Roberts, S., op cit, p.21.

of a sister. To facilitate this process, the culture deliberately created strong relationships of economic dependence, between the household leader and his sisters.

Other factors which encouraged male domination within this practice were that a man who did not give his **bogadi** had no legal rights over his own children. He also lost prestige in the community. In addition to his undergoing constant pressure from his wife's parents, it was often seen as a shame for the woman herself. This made the practice of insisting that a woman was married and was honourable in the society seem very attractive and so the transfer of **bogadi** became a symbol of male power. It was also a symbol of permanent security and help to the man's mother, from her daughter-in-law. **Bogadi** also became a source of prestige because it gave the elders a measure of control over the young man, who solely depended on them for (marital) resources. These younger men were, therefore, not expected to accumulate their own economic resources, nor fulfil their matrimonial obligations on their own.

In cases of barrenness or childlessness, at death, the 'payment' of **bogadi** justified a replacement of the wife by a very close relative, usually her sister.⁷⁰⁹ This shows how women were manipulated to suit the conditions of men. Their status largely depended on their fertility, especially the birth of boys, which was a crucial factor for their husband's social identity and esteem. It was for the same reasons that this practice was used to justify the **seantlo** practice (levirate marriage). A woman married with **bogadi** was expected to have sexual relations with a member of her deceased husband's group, to raise offspring for the perpetuation of the latter's family line. This custom denied the widow the right to decide her own future.⁷¹⁰

While the **bogadi** practice was seen as a crucial economic asset and boost, the transactions were a tangible expression for developing ties with affinal families.⁷¹¹ Therefore the initiative in making a choice for their son's first wife,⁷¹² followed by the fact that the major donors and recipients of **bogadi**

⁷⁰⁹. In fact, if no suitable arrangement was made, the possibility of reclaiming **bogadi** at her death could not be ruled out.

⁷¹⁰. *Botswana National Archives*, Serowe, 337, S.601/8: "Khama's Life" by Sekgoma Khama, 28 March, 1925. At his death Kgari (1817-1826/8) had three wives - the chief wife Mma-Polao - childless,, Bojale, Kgama II's mother, Dibeelane, Sekgoma's mother. According to tradition Kgama was the apparent heir in the barrenness of the first. Sedimo (uncle) acting as regent under the levirate law raised a son called Macheng, with Bojale, who hierarchically became senior to Sekgoma I. Kgama's reign was short (1833-5) and was followed by a succession dispute between Sekgoma and Macheng's mother. Also see Schapera, I., (1970) op cit, p.134.

⁷¹¹. Schapera, I., 1970. op cit, pp.138-147.

⁷¹². Setiloane, G.M., (1975) op cit, p.30.

were males, became a controlling cycle for wealth through giving and receiving. Through this process, women could be seen as being used to create wealth, in order to maintain that status quo.

In spite of this obvious cultural bias against women, it has to be observed that while the **bogadi** practice involved a complex social transaction, which had its own positive aspects.⁷¹³ The origin of the practice had good intentions, which were to adapt the local socio-economic conditions of the people. It was through this that the extended families corporately took responsibility in marriages, representing more than just the interests of the male population.

Despite its function, as a mechanism supporting the male domination and superiority complex, the practice could in no way be termed as an acquisition of wives for cattle.

vi). Adultery and Divorce

In the period discussed there was a much smaller number of marriages ending in divorce, than is the case today. However, the population figures of the mid-twentieth century reveal that there were more divorced women than men.⁷¹⁴ One obvious factor, which is likely to have contributed was the fact that, historically the grounds for divorce were always different for men and women. For men, the grounds for divorce were a wife's infidelity, barrenness, sorcery, refusal or failure to perform domestic duties and other acts, regarded as insubordination on the part of the wife.⁷¹⁵

Divorce, was not a pleasant option for women, because customarily, there were adverse consequences associated with it. Whenever divorce occurred the rights to property and the custody of children was granted to the man, who also kept most of the valuable property. On the contrary, a wife could not divorce her husband on the grounds of infidelity and cruelty, unless his behaviour was extremely excessive. Perseverance, in the face of marital problems, was expected from women.

⁷¹³. Kuper, A., (1982), op. cit, pp.3,26.

⁷¹⁴. The earliest census of 1946 show that only 2.3% of married men and 4.9% of the married women were described as divorced: Schapera, I., (1970) op cit, p.43. The low rate of divorce was attributed to the nature of the traditional mode of resolving dispute. The attempt to reconcile the partners, with the case revolving between the extended family, ward, and the main **kgotla** for a long time.

⁷¹⁵. One of the extreme examples of the allegations of the manipulations of women involved Motswasele II, Sechele's father, who sometimes took other men's wives for himself by force and allowed his favourites to do so with impunity, and was as a result assassinated by his people at a **kgotla** assembly in 1823: see Schapera, I., (1970) op cit, p.141 citing *Hermannsburg Missionblatt*, (1859), p.38.

A male adulterer was liable to the payment of damages to the offended husband. Failure to fulfil this requirement could lead to the woman being divorced.⁷¹⁶ However, in the case of a male offender, the wife had no such legal redress, or protection, against her husband's unfaithfulness.⁷¹⁷ Divorce for a woman also had shameful consequences because it meant returning to her father's home without any property, and children, and once again, coming under the guardianship of a member of her own family group, who subsequently became responsible for her maintenance. Such a woman was treated with suspicion, she was regarded as being incorrigible, and having gone beyond her husband's control. Her economic dependency, was also socially demoralising. Like divorce, the polygamous marriages worked in favour of men.

vii). Polygamous Marriages

While the traditional marriage was patrilocal, it was also potentially polygamous.⁷¹⁸ In such marriage relationships, patriarchalism was strongly felt. While each of these families were part of several different households, living side by side, they culturally acknowledged a common male elder, who united them to a common grandfather. This male elder, co-ordinated important domestic events and activities such as marriage negotiations, feasts and clearing of new fields.⁷¹⁹ Sekgoma, for instance, was said to be endowed with supernatural power and therefore a uniting figure for his royal family. He also used his economic power to acquire a number of wives and thus support his social status.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁶ Schapera, I., (1970) op cit, p.141-2. Although men could be divorced for sorcery, desertion or habitual ill-treatment or lack of support, they could not be penalised for polygamy, adultery and concubinage (**bonyatsi**) and for frequently visiting at her own home. This practice gave rise to bitterness, envy, jealousy etc, sometimes the man's wife retaliated by assaulting her or setting fire to her hut.

⁷¹⁷ Roberts, S., (1956), op. cit, p.56.

⁷¹⁸ In 1850 Livingstone recorded that, of the 278 married Kaa men, whose population was later co-opted into the Ngwato, 121 were polygamists, of whom 94 had two wives each, 25 three wives, and two four wives. Cited in both Schapera, I., (1953) op cit, p.39 & J.J. Freeman, (1851) *A Tour in South Africa*, p.280.

⁷¹⁹ Schapera, I., (1953) op cit, p.40.

⁷²⁰ Lloyd, E., (1895) op cit, p.76; Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.397; See John Mackenzie To LMS, Shoshong, 19 March, 1866 in M.D. Mackenzie (1922), op cit, pp.19, 108; Schapera, I., (1953). op cit, pp. 39-40; Mackenzie, W.D., (1922) op cit, p.100; Livingstone, D., (1857) op cit, pp.8-10; Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.415-6. Macheng a son of Kgari's head wife was the legal heir, but Sekgoma being the eldest son of a subordinate wife usurped the throne, and killed the supporters of Macheng's mother, who fled with young Macheng to the Kwena capital.

The ranking of the wives of a polygamist created a problem in matters of inheritance and the distribution of household property at the death of a husband.

viv). Inheritance

The law of inheritance was influenced by the fact that Tswana society was predominantly patrilineal. Family membership and descent was traced through the name of their male leader's agnatic ancestor. This also meant that inheritance passed from the father to the eldest son, or any other legitimate male family successor.⁷²¹ While the other sons got smaller shares, women received nothing substantial, which meant that they remained economically dependent. Even when the deceased man had no male offspring, the inheritance was passed to the nearest male agnate.⁷²²

Through the custom of **tswaiso** (earmarking of animals to someone), sons began to acquire cattle long before their marriage.

Generally, the land and other forms of property were traditionally subject to male ownership and management, with women using them with the consent of men. This was the case possibly because only the husband had the legal right to acquire land in a patrilocal residence, while, at her matrilocal residence, the woman could only use the land allocated to her father. At the death of her husband she was entitled to occupy her husband's dwelling, but if she decided to return to her descent group she could only use her father's land.⁷²³ Following divorce a woman could only take household property with her, which were especially associated with a woman's social role. All the other major property such as land, cattle etc naturally became the husband's property.⁷²⁴

At a family level, only men had authority in matters of government, religious and ceremonial practices.

6.3. Government and Politics

At a territorial level gender distinction was fundamental to most social, political, economic and religious institutions. Central to these, for the BaNgwato, were the **Kgotla** (the national council of all men) and kingship institutions.

⁷²¹. The Setswana word **mojaboswa** means the principal heir to his father's property.

⁷²². Schapera, I., (1953), op cit, pp.37-43; & (1938), op cit, pp.28f; Roberts, S., & Comaroff, J., (1976).

⁷²³. Roberts, S., 1956. op cit, pp.40-2.

⁷²⁴. Ibid, pp.42-50.

i). Kgotla Institution

The **Kgotla**,⁷²⁵ was the forum in which state matters and disputes were aired; the scene of power and decision making. This followed the substance of a well-known proverbial Tswana saying that - '**Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho**', (government for, by and of the people) and stressed the need for people's virtues and open consultations and democracy but excluded women. The whole tragedy of this tradition was the fact that it preserved the past cultural heritage of the people, the wisdom and knowledge of the forefathers, keeping immense powers revolving around men. Whilst it completely excluded women from its debates and deliberations; it dealt with crucial matters of public policy, which had unprecedented binding authority to all.⁷²⁶ This was despite its basic, well-known principle that '**Mmualebe o bua la gagwe**', meaning that freedom of opinion and the right of participation was fundamental. This right of freedom was restricted to men. Although they were very democratic when compared with Royal power among Zulu and Ndebele, such traditional laws, and policies proceeding from therein, were merely imposed on women. These male views, ideas, experiences and thought patterns were often biased against women, in favour of men, because the experiences of women were simply ignored, or, modelled under categories created by and appropriated as male.

The **Kgotla** institution denied women many fundamental rights, such as; the right to voice their views in matters affecting their lives and their children.⁷²⁷ This further marginalised them to child-bearing and domestic functions, while, men were closely associated with the political structures which were seen to require thought, knowledge, and strength. This presented men as all-knowing and primarily creative.⁷²⁸

ii). Kingship Structure

The historical traditions and writings of early observers, indicate that people looked to their King in all social matters.⁷²⁹ The information given, by the woman Thathlone, to Willoughby in 1901 is revealing:

⁷²⁵. A council of all adult men led by the King and his headmen. See Schapera, I., (1956) *A Handbook of Tswana Law & Custom*, chp.3; M. Fortes & E.E. Evans - Pritchard (eds), (1940) 'The Political Organisation of the Ngwato of Bechuanaland Protectorate', in *African Political Systems*; Also see Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.66.

⁷²⁶. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, p.179.

⁷²⁷ Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.371; Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.230.

⁷²⁸. Thompson, G., (1827), *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, p.101. Shows that the **kgotla** is male dominated.

⁷²⁹. Ashton, 1937, 'Notes on the Political and Judicial Organization of the Tswana', in *Bantu Studies*, 11, pp.7-83; Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.365-9.

'I have said that the chief is the centre of everything done in Bechuana tribe. They called the chief their God. If the chief spoke to a person, he (the person) assented by saying, "Yes, my God." This is the assent of a mo(Tswana). Their expression "my God" does not mean the chief is really God, it means that he is their superior He is the one who can pray for them to God, because, he is the first born.'⁷³⁰

Due to cultural attributes against women and dominance of patrilineal descent in the formation of political authority, all the Ngwato rulers were men.⁷³¹ Robert Moffat wrote saying:

'Each tribe has its chief or King, who commonly resides in the largest town, and is held sacred from his hereditary right to that office.'⁷³²

Patriarchal seniority, which was the yardstick for assessment of status, was generally accepted as a norm. In public assemblies, such as initiation ceremonies, meals and formal discussions, the order of precedence was always observed. Qualities such as bravery in war, eloquence in **kgotla** debates, knowledge of public laws and other affairs, were basically relevant to men only. Through these qualities and activities men gained high social status and respect.⁷³³ Women were however excluded from these channels of obtaining social prestige and political power.

As the foregoing discussion shows, it was the descendants of a particular family which constituted the aristocracy of the nation. The BaNgwato, for instance, claimed their descent from a remote past, from which King Mathiba (c.1780-95) was the most celebrated and remembered royal ancestor. This criteria, to political leadership, completely left women out of any considerations because all these offices were based on patriarchal legacies. In the nineteenth century, there arose a serious conflict between Macheng's mother and Sekgoma because of her attempt to try to get involved in political matters.⁷³⁴

The Tswana proverbial saying: "**Kgosi ke kgosi ka e tsetswe**," (kingship is born not acquired) basically referred to men, because women were debarred, by Tswana law, from acquiring that highest political office.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁰. Willoughby, W.C., Folder 798, in Chirenji J.M., (1977) op cit, p.33. John Philip also testified to the power of the Kings: *Researches in South Africa*, 2vols., p.131.

⁷³¹. Willoughby, W.C., (1923) op cit. Also Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp. 371-3.

⁷³². Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.66.

⁷³³. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, pp.227-9.

⁷³⁴. Schapera, I., (1970) op cit, pp.3,4; Moffat R., to LMS, (Molopo River), Journal of Tour to North, May & June, 1854, SOAS: S\A, B29 F1 JA.

⁷³⁵. Lloyd, E., Three Great African Chiefs, p.76; Seaver, David Livingstone - His Life and Letters, p.58.

6.4. Traditional Law

Tswana laws were generally known as **Melao Ya Tlholego** (natural laws) because they were believed to have been divinely instituted by **Modimo**, (God given) from the time that man himself came into being. W. C. Willoughby⁷³⁶ wrote:

‘When Bantu speak of law, they mean an unwritten law (like our common law) that never was made, that has always been in force, and that exists only in the minds of people.’

These laws were carefully transmitted by word of mouth. In the **bogwera** (the boys initiation) schools, for instance, young men were, among other things, introduced to the traditional law and administration. Sekgoma understood the role of Christianity as working towards alienating his young men from this essential training and this resulted in him objecting to that influence.⁷³⁷ He tenaciously clung to these customs and laws, believing that they were directly given by his forefathers. However, the disruption of the **bojale**, the equivalent school for girls, did not worry him.⁷³⁸ The nature and function of the Tswana law and customs, was therefore seen in terms of male dominance, and exposed women to a variety of exploitative measures. These laws were created and operated to be of benefit to the very persons, (the males) who transmitted and enforced them.

6.5. Religious Practices

In this kind of patrilineal society the **badimo** (ancestors) of the man’s family were seen as responsible for the health of the community. They maintained a tight grip on the community and acquired a prestigious position, as territorial deities.⁷³⁹ Their prominence was especially felt when their descendants defeated invaders, had good rains, good harvests and such. This is why most religious rites were performed by the family head, village head, chief or King. Males were vital actors in the religious ceremonies which were central to the people’s life.⁷⁴⁰ Willoughby, observed that:

‘Bantu life is essentially religious. The relation of the individual to the family, the clan, and the tribe, - politics, ethics, law, status, social amenities, festivals - all that

⁷³⁶. Willoughby, W.C., 1923. op cit, p.99; also see John Mackenzie, 1883. (Reply, 29. XI. 1881 to questionnaire on the legislative procedure,) ‘Report ... of the Government Commission on Native Laws & Customs’, Cape Town, p.231 - 48, in Isaac Schapera, 1970. p.19.

⁷³⁷. J. MacKenzie, (1871) op. cit, p.412.

⁷³⁸ Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.396-7.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ See Chapter 3: section on rain-making rites.

is good and much that is bad in Bantu life is grounded in Bantu religion.’⁷⁴¹

Patriarchy was basic to this religious structure. The King and his national **dingaka**, who were always men, were at the centre of religion. This meant that women were left out from officiating at any of the principal sacrificial rites, such as rain making, fertility of crops and those rites inaugurating war etc. Sekgoma I, as a **ngaka** himself, was always supported by a class of male **dingaka**, such as Pelotona, in conducting religious activities, such as rain making rites.⁷⁴²

6.6. Rain-Making Rites

The rain-making practices, described in chapter three, revealed that there was a close connection between the functions of kingship and **bongaka**. Whenever there was drought, people did not hesitate to hold the King and his national **dingaka** (**boroka ba pula** professional rain makers) responsible. The people insisted that it was the king’s divine responsibility to give them rain, because, traditionally only selected men were endowed with skills of rain-making. Every royal son and those of **dingaka**, were taught these rain making skills as part of their heritage. Even in this essential training, women were not considered at all.⁷⁴³ The description of this practice, by John MacKenzie, clearly states that these **dingaka** were predominantly men. He wrote that:

‘As ngaka or priest the chief is supported by a class of men (dingaka) who not only practise the art of healing but are professors ... and have taken degrees in rain-making. In Shoshong there are a good many of this influential class.’⁷⁴⁴

Schapera, whose main source seems to have been MacKenzie, also pointed out that:

‘Rainmaking was everywhere held to be an attribute to the chiefship, and a chiefs reputation and popularity were often determined by the nature of the rainmaking during his period of rule . Some of the rites he performed himself, others were carried out at his request or under his supervision by professional rainmakers (boroka ba pula) and other members of the tribe.’⁷⁴⁵

This patriarchal association, in terms of rain making rites was further described by Willoughby as follows:

⁷⁴¹. Willoughby, W.C., 1928. op cit, p.1.

⁷⁴² Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.380 & 381.

⁷⁴³. Willoughby, W.C., (1932) op cit, pp. 36-40.. Mackenzie, J. (1871) op cit, pp.381-3; Schapera, I., (1971) *RainMaking Rites of Tswana Tribes*.

⁷⁴⁴. Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.381.

⁷⁴⁵. Schapera, I., (1976) op cit, p.60.

'The men assembled by regiments and marched forth from the town to the trysting - place, where the children of the chieftainship each made a formal speech in order of seniority, addressing the paramount in some such words as these: "We seek rain from you, chief. Where do you want us to look, that thus you do not give us rain, Son-of-Kgari (or whatever distinguished ancestor was invoked for the occasion)... and the speaker glided forthwith into the praise-song of the ancestor mentioned. Whereupon the most important men in the Assembly chanted the refrain: "Give us rain, Son - of - Kgari.' The paramount chief was expected to reply: I hear you; and the rain will fall.'⁷⁴⁶

The King's function to preside over this ritual was immensely important. Although there were women older than the King, even those of royal ancestry, the King as patriarch, was considered the most senior and therefore the right candidate. Life, growth, productivity, strength, and accomplishment in general, were solely dependent on him. Having discovered that in all political, religious, economic and social matters men were the dominating figures, what then was the traditional Ngwato belief, about the position of women in the world of the **badimo**?

6.7. Death and Burial

That there was life after death, was not a matter of argument for the BaNgwato. They believed in the continued leadership of their patriarchs in the form of ancestral spirits (**badimo**). Willoughby wrote, for instance, saying that:

'Neither of them, when they bury their dead, hesitates for a moment to express the hope of seeing them again; and "when souls are passing over", those who remain send greetings to those who have gone before.'⁷⁴⁷

Willoughby's further observation that: 'The power of the ancestors has not been lessened by death;...',⁷⁴⁸ also shows that death was seen as merely a birth into another life. In this way, the character and status of men and women was not believed to be changed by death. The royal ancestors kept a watchful eye on their descendants and punished those who infringed on the ancient laws and customs of their people. But they were also ever willing to protect those, of their lineage who treated them with befitting respect and obedience. John MacKenzie, said that Sekgoma strongly believed that the changing of laws and customs angered ancestors:

"How should I answer to Khari (sic) if I changed the customs of the town?" said Sekhome (sic) to me on one occasion when we were conversing on this subject."⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁶. Willoughby, W. C., (1923) op cit, p.204-5.

⁷⁴⁷. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, p.2.

⁷⁴⁸. Ibid, p.80.

⁷⁴⁹. Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.397.

By inference, the position of women, as has been described was maintained, which suggested that their role could never be changed because of the fear of the male ancestors. The patriarchal status was seen to be as persistent as life itself; with Kings remaining Kings, patriarchs remaining patriarchs and household leaders retaining their old standing in the family; with husbands, sons and boys still occupying their male superior position; while women, daughters and girls continued to occupy a subordinate and inferior position.⁷⁵⁰

The BaNgwato believed, that at death, an individual simply moved to another level of life. He/She continued to be part of the community which had hitherto, been everything to them. At this level women still, continued to obey and serve the males, who were considered to be senior. They looked to them for guidance, protection and benefits.⁷⁵¹ This is why old women were often buried in the house, as a symbol of womanhood, and attachment to household work. This continued to limit the role of women to domestic activities, even at death. On the contrary, old men were often buried at the cattle kraal and the belief was that their spirits hovered over the cattle and protected them.⁷⁵² It was also for this reason that a man was buried with his weapons, while a woman was accompanied by her hoes and some seeds. The implication was that the man needed weapons for hunting and protecting his livestock; while the woman was believed to continue to cultivate the soil.⁷⁵³

Furthermore, the **badimo** of a husband did not directly help his wife, whereas they helped the man's children. The mother's ancestral spirits occasionally demanded attention from them, but it was the patrilineal obligations which were binding.⁷⁵⁴ For public benefits, such as the celebration of agricultural seasons, (eg. harvest, sowing, fertility, herds), seasonal hunting occasions or societal crisis, they turned to the **badimo** of the ruling dynasty. This was an affirmation of tribal solidarity, which demanded the loyalty of every member for patriarchal leadership.⁷⁵⁵ Even in death, patriarchs were

⁷⁵⁰. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, pp.1-89: in this he discusses religion as the basis of Bantu life and its implications for life after death, as well as related rituals.

⁷⁵¹. Ibid, Chp two.

⁷⁵². Ibid, p.71.

⁷⁵³. Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, pp.40, 57-102, 270-366.

⁷⁵⁴. Ibid, p.179.

⁷⁵⁵. Ibid, p.180; Willoughby, W.C., (1905) "Notes on Totemism of the Becwana" *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, 35, pp.295-314; Also Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, pp.226-254; Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.383f.

acknowledged as responsible for societal prosperity and security, which all worked in favour of men.⁷⁵⁶

6.7. Women's Cultural Experience - A Summary

The Ngwato male dominated culture believed that male leadership never came to an end - it went on, even beyond death. Whether it be the religious or political sphere, the family, like the public conceptions, was male dominated.⁷⁵⁷ In family matters the household head presided as the family priest, while in public engagements either **dingaka**, headmen or the King presided. Because of this bias against women, religious traditions and beliefs could not escape gender distinctions.⁷⁵⁸ Schapera for instance, pointed out that:

'Land, livestock, huts, and other property are controlled by the household-head, who allocates them for use among his dependants. He is the legal head of the group, entitled to obedience, service and respect from his wives and children.'⁷⁵⁹

The Ngwato law, however, did not necessarily, consciously or deliberately deprive women freedom of participation in the state building process.

This section has, therefore, observed that the disadvantages faced by women emanated from the cultural approaches which emphasized gender relations, which made a differentiation between male and female situations. The fact that people are born biologically male or female, was interpreted to mean that they acquired a gender identity from social structures such as gender division of labour, access to and control over resources. The Ngwato law and custom put a special emphasis on gender, such that work was gendered so much that some tasks were seen as women's work and demeaning for men, while others were strictly for men.

The foregoing pages have also shown that economic and social structures made women powerless. For instance, they could not present themselves alone in public places. These social structures suggested the presence of immovable social forces in whose operation women had to simply acquiesce. Female gender subordination and male bias, therefore, denied women equal opportunity, because the whole system generally operated in favour of men as a gender and against women as a gender.

⁷⁵⁶. Willoughby, W.C., Notes on the totemism of the Becwana', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institution*, 35, pp.302-11; Willoughby, W.C., (1928) op cit, pp.226-34, 251-4, 291; Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.383f; Schapera, I., (1953) op cit, pp.59-60.

⁷⁵⁷. Willoughby, W.C., (1828) op cit, p.179.

⁷⁵⁸. Schapera, I., (1953) *The Tswana*, p.59.

⁷⁵⁹. Schapera, I., (1953) op cit, p.40.

Another observation is that all women did not face the same kind of and same degree of male bias; others enjoyed the fruits of other kinds of bias, or share the deprivations, with men in the same class, ethnic group or region. Those who were disadvantaged by it lived daily in intimate personal relationships with those who were advantaged by it. It is however true that as a whole, women, regardless of their status, were seen to gain from co-operating with men. Those women who did not co-operate with men and tried to stand on their own, without a husband, uncle, or brother tended to be worse off, than if they entered into some kind of co-operation with men. Although female - headed households were uncommon, the example of the **bonyatsi** system described above goes to prove this. This meant that women with well-defined perceptions of their own interests would have likely to be less favourable to most men. If this was the case, then, it would have perpetuated male bias, and preserved the subordination of women.

Although male bias often resulted from mere prejudice in everyday attitudes and actions at the conscious level, it is also obvious that it was also embedded in unconscious perceptions, habits and failure of men to ask relevant and crucial questions. For instance, women's contribution to child-upbringing and food production tended to be overlooked or seen as less deserving than male tasks. This implied that women's work did not make a substantial contribution to the home. Although male bias consciously and unconsciously (that is, in action and thought) saw male economic, educational and social structures to be superior, the price of women's contribution was very expensive.

This section has also observed that the Ngwato tended to give more prestige to sons. This was seen as entirely rational, because in most circumstances boys were regarded to be more valuable; socially, politically, economically and religiously, than daughters. The future of the household and society was seen to depend on the survival of sons. The above described historical socio - economic categories also implied that farmers were men, because major decision-making and the overall management responsibility in agriculture was seen as men's role, although it was women who practically did all the arable work. It was women who managed post - harvest activities, such as processing, storage, while the marketing of such products was done by men. In recent years the picture of farmers as men has also disadvantaged women farmers and hindered attempts to improve agricultural productivity throughout Botswana or in the whole of Southern Africa. This is because the implicit assumption that farmers are men, has meant that new agricultural technology and inputs flowed mainly to men. Although chapter seven will reveal that during male labour migration, women ignored cultural division of labour and overloaded themselves and sustained agricultural productivity, men still found new ways of dominating and sustaining their status.

In summary of this section, therefore, it must be pointed out that the causes of male bias in everyday

attitudes, discussions and practices were mainly shaped and reinforced by cultural factors. The key structural factors were due to the way economic, political, social and religious processes were interrelated and organised. With few exceptions, women's interests were marginalised in the formulation and implementation of economic processes. Women's voices played a very little part, because there were frequent factors that inhibited women from speaking out in public meetings or discussions and limited them to household spheres, thus cutting them off from the economic and political decision-making processes. The overall picture is that, women were made to be dependent on men for access to the resources required to make a living and could, for instance, lose this access through divorce. All these were explained in religious and cultural terms.

In order to overcome male bias more than changes were required in the everyday attitudes and cultural processes, but that deep economic and social life needed structural alterations. Although the role of Christianity and education offered a more optimistic view for women, they also had their limitations. The following section will however show how the Ngwato cultural atmosphere influenced the spread of Christianity.

6.9. Ngwato Early Christianity, and Women in Transition

For women, tradition, in many ways, held nothing hopeful for them. Likewise, the future of women within the missionary and Ngwato male dominated Christianity, also seemed to hold nothing, until perhaps the early years of the twentieth century. In many ways the ideas, images, and symbols of the early missionary or Ngwato type of Christianity, strengthened that male position. In this way the missionaries were victims of both their own European and of the Ngwato patriarchal notions and structures.

6.10. Factors Influencing Missionary's Conception of Women

This negative attitude against women goes on far back as the first century. The reformation period saw women's sole role as the family.⁷⁶⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, during the Evangelical Revival in the United States, women began to create a new role for themselves. Although, in the period 1900 - 1914, the biggest number of new missionaries were women, bias against them was still evident. *The Watchman*, for instance, wrote saying:

'Christianity emasculates no man, makes no man effeminate, depreciates no manly virtue. There is nothing that puts so much iron in the blood; nothing that tones and builds up manly virtue; ... nothing that emphasizes and exalts manliness, as Christianity.'⁷⁶¹

In the same period in 1912 the editor of *Our Hope* also painted the same picture saying:

'Women leaving her sphere, becomes by it an instrument of Satan Corruption of the vilest kind must follow.'⁷⁶²

This is what made the career of women missionaries so unusual. But still single women missionaries worked as role models and reformers of society in Southern Africa and in Ngwatoland specifically and began to make an impact on the view of Christianity on women. Using the same Ngwato male patriarchal language, the majority of male missionaries had restricted the women's role to the home, which denied them the chance to contribute in the political and religious sphere.⁷⁶³ Women only

⁷⁶⁰. cf. Piper, 942 cited in Neuer, W., (1981), *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective*, (trns. by Gordon Wenham, 1990, Hodder & Stoughton, London), p.135; Brathwaite, R., (1631) *The English Gentleman*, pp.89-90; Gouge, W., (1622), *Of domestical duties*, pp.16,18.

⁷⁶¹. Betty A. Deberg, 'Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism', in *Church History*, (1992) The American Society of Church History, p.467-8.

⁷⁶²Ibid.

⁷⁶³See chapter two.

featured in their history whenever they wanted to illustrate how Christianity had benefitted them. Seeing gender in terms of power the missionary historiography, preserved some of the key social historical traditions, especially those which seemed to facilitate their objectives in Africa. A critical review of the missionary literature, however, shows that Ngwato women were not as silent as portrayed.

Missionary education and Christianity as well as other European forces, were gradually bringing women into the centre of public activity and recognition. This role was first inspired by missionary wives and later, in the last years of the nineteenth century, by the single women missionaries and the Ngwato women themselves. As we will see in the next chapter, European single women missionaries, at times, strongly challenged certain foreign and local oppressive measures on women, despite the similar patronizing attitudes that were exhibited by their 'culturally superior' counterparts, the male European missionaries. Some of these women missionaries, of the nineteenth and twentieth century were themselves inspired by the European feminist ideas. Women and men missionaries, therefore, were seen as operating somewhat differently.

6.11. The First Responses of Ngwato Women to Christianity

i). Beginnings of Ngwato Christianity

Christianity first reached the BaNgwato through Livingstone, followed by a few Tswana evangelists from Kudumane, then through the German missionaries in 1859, who were permanently replaced by the London Missionary Society in 1862.⁷⁶⁴ While, we have pointed out in chapter two that, the invitation to the missionaries from the BaNgwato was officially endorsed by King Sekgoma, it was from the women, that the greatest response to Christianity came. The missionaries, however, only stressed the conversion or heathenism of the patriarchal Kings - such as Sekgoma I's long life of heathenism, in contrast to Khama III's conversion and its effects. Going by the missionaries' literature and other accounts, Khama's life, together with that of the other members of the royal family such as his brothers and other close kinsmen, who, themselves became prominent deacons, and evangelists, became the most important story and overshadowed the role of women.⁷⁶⁵

Khama's conversion to Christianity itself, had serious implications for both men and women. Women, who were the major food producers, were forbidden to either travel to or work on their fields on the Sabbath. The legislation of Christianity led to widespread transformation of various traditional customs

⁷⁶⁴See chapter one for details.

⁷⁶⁵Schapera, I., (1970) *Tribal Innovators: Tswana Chiefs and Social Change, 1795-1940*, p.124.

and rites such as rain making rites, marriage laws, agricultural practices and so on. While this affected women's activities such as food production, due to new laws forbidding working their fields on the Sabbath, men were occupying new forms of authority in the new Christian structure.⁷⁶⁶

Writing in 1863, about his initial impressions and prospects of Christianity at Shoshong Roger Price, one of the first LMS missionaries to be stationed there, said:

'I am happy to be able to say that here there seems to be few who have sincerely embraced the Gospel, among whom are two of the chief's sons, who are in every way very promising young men.'⁷⁶⁷

It was the status of Khama and Kgamane, as members of the royal family, and as males that made them more outstanding converts, for the missionary, than female converts were. Other correspondence, by Mr Price and other missionaries, shows that women featured among the first majority of enthusiastic converts to Christianity, but like in the Tswana tradition they were not taken seriously. It was the male response which seemed to be more crucial for the missionaries. This was possibly because it was the 'powerful' males who they hoped would influence public opinions and decisions in favour of mission work. Again, influenced by their European notions of priesthood, which was mainly dominated by men, the missionaries were more interested in male converts, who they hoped to train as deacons, evangelists and school teachers. Another reason for this is possibly explained by Loades who wrote:

'For where the male has been thought to represent the whole of humanity, the half has been mistaken for the whole, so that what has been described has been distorted in such a way that we cannot see it correctly. As long as men believe that experience and all of human thought, abstract definition and description of the real will alike be inaccurate.'⁷⁶⁸

The missionaries supported the Ngwato traditional male dominated concepts and principles right from the onset. For instance, in the conflict between the German Hermannsburg and the LMS missionaries, it was, the LMS which won the favour of the Ngwato **Kgotla** and consequently were invited to continue working at the Shoshong station, because they knew who to please: that is, the influential dominated male council(the **Kgotla**). Regarding this Roger Price, wrote:

'I was requested by Sekhomi and his sons to write them (Germans) to turn back, - That it was in vain their coming forward - that they would not be received.'⁷⁶⁹

It was therefore, the traditional male power which the missionaries saw as vital to the legislation and

⁷⁶⁶. Chapter two shows how these rites empowered men.

⁷⁶⁷. Roger Price to LMS, July 15, 1863 (Shoshong), SOAS: B33 F1 JB.

⁷⁶⁸Loades, A., (1990) Feminist Theology: A Reader, p.1.

⁷⁶⁹. Roger Price to LMS, February 22, 1864, (Dinokane), SOAS: B33 F3 JA.

rapid spread of Christianity. It was also the **Kgotla** male leadership which was responsible for deciding which European Society could work among the BaNgwato. By adopting this strategy, the missionaries had acknowledged the strengths of the culture which they were trying to destroy. Writing of this, Robert Moffat said:

‘We found that the Hanoverian missionary, Mr Kyser, who had come here in company with Mr Zimmerman, had, as I expected been unconditionally turned back, Mr Keyser however left me a note with Kame, in which he stated that Sekome and the Bamangwato were unwilling to receive them at that time....’⁷⁷⁰

It was after this expulsion of the German missionaries, that the LMS missionaries’ applications for residence had been welcomed at Shoshong. The process of this welcome was male influenced and oriented. It recognised the role played by the Ngwato men, which the missionaries now wanted to use for the spread of Christianity.⁷⁷¹ In doing this, they had to see men as their key targets, which overshadowed the good response of women who, under challenging circumstances, took a leading step in response to Christianity. The result of this was that the number of enquirers and Church membership grew rapidly. The high ratio of women contrasted to that of men, was due to the fact that whenever a husband responded to Christianity, the whole family became Church members, while the conversion of a women often met severe opposition from non-christian members of her family. For instance, while Khama’s mother made a deep impression on the missionaries, she was never officially admitted into Church baptism and membership. In fact her story, as a secret disciple of Christianity, is not fully told, it is only described in one or two sentences.⁷⁷² This was consistent with, or influenced by, Ngwato past and cultural trappings, whereby religious responses were taken, with the household male taking a leading role. Khama’s mother is only an example representing a much larger number of women, who were part of the first group of converts, such as Goitseman, Baitlhopi, and Mogomotsi’s wife and daughters, whose story did not receive much space in the missionary histories.⁷⁷³

In her journals, of 1854 - 1883, Mrs E.L. Price, like her husband Roger Price and John MacKenzie in their correspondences, gave hints of the sincerity and courage of the young women believers. In the midst of intense opposition from their friends, females and authorities, who often tried to compel them to denounce Christianity, they remained faithful. Mrs Price gives an example of two sisters Kcalse (also known as Goitseman) and Baitlhopi Tshukudu to show how committed they were to their Christian

⁷⁷⁰Robert Moffat to LMS, March 29, 1864, (Shoshong) SOAS: B33 F3 JA.

⁷⁷¹Robert Moffat to LMS, May 19, 1865 (Shoshong), SOAS: B33 F5 JA; John Mackenzie to LMS, May, 1866 (Shoshong), SOAS: B34 F1 JA; John Mackenzie to LMS, July 3, 1866 (Shoshong), SOAS: B34 F1 JB.

⁷⁷²Long, U., (1956) p.158.

⁷⁷³. See chapter two.

faith. Extracts from the baptismal register kept by the Rev. H.C. Schulenburg and printed in J.C. Harris' *Khama, the Great African Chief*, (London, 1922) reveals that Goitsewang, who the register also names Elizabetha, was baptised at 16, on 27 April, 1862, and married to Khama on the 22 May, 1862. This marriage was regarded as second rate by Sekgoma, who insisted that Khama should marry the daughter of a senior headman and a close friend, Pelotona, who was also a leading **ngaka**. Sekgoma wanted this woman to be the head wife in Khama's house, despite the fact that she was already married to another man and had borne him two children. This was a test to Goitsewang, who had to face the ridicule.⁷⁷⁴ Baitlhopi was the first woman in Shoshong to get married, without having undergone the rite of **bojale**, because of her Christian convictions. Such a move aroused intense opposition from all the critics of Christianity, especially King Sekgoma.⁷⁷⁵

Another example comes from a Shoshong woman of Kalanga origin, named Mabu (possibly Mavu), who presented John MacKenzie with an aspect of the suffering of women. He described her tragic story, saying:

'One day Mogomotsi ... came to my house with a miserable looking Makalaka woman, who was unable to stand erect, but crept on her hands and knees. Mogomotsi explained that as he was coming down the kloof or gorge, he found a number of boys stoning the poor woman, shouting out legoru (thief) at the top of their voices. It seemed the woman, in the extremity of hunger, had stolen some sour milk from a "likuka", or leathern (sic) bottle, which was hanging in the sun, and, being perfectly friendless and helpless, the cruel heathen children were stoning her in the river Mogomotsi said, - now that the word of God had come to the town, it ought to prevent such cruel deeds, and therefore he had brought her to me.'⁷⁷⁶

Mabu later became one of the first committed converts to the Christian faith. This took place against all sorts of threats and the fierce opposition of her guardians and friends. In Christianity, women like Mabu, who lived under serfdom found that they were, for the first time, free to make their own choices. There are several other incidents, which if properly dealt, would enable a proper historical account of the immense contribution, made by women, to be written. This would also contribute to the development of a constructive history of women, by radically reconstructing the negative cultural traditions and also the European male conceptualized Christianity, and help us to come to terms with the reality that humanity should consist of both women and men. The historical response of women to Christianity deserves a proper treatment. The traditional reading and writing of history whereby women are thoroughly obscured from the picture, can no longer be acceptable. This new approach would have

⁷⁷⁴Mackenzie W.D., (1922) op cit, p.108; Smith, E.W., (1957) op cit, p.144.

⁷⁷⁵Long, U., (1956) op cit, pp.108, 128.

⁷⁷⁶Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.263; Long, U., (1856) op cit, p.132.

to look at specific processes through which women found meaning, interpreted it, and explained their past and present within Christianity, which is lacking in the missionary records and histories.

It is evident that Christianity was, in the 1860s, rapidly spreading among the Ngwato people, with an increased number of enquirers, committed Christians and scholars. Women were, not only the majority in the Ngwato Church, but were also making a substantial contribution to its spiritual and physical growth.⁷⁷⁷ In the building of the new Ngwato Church in 1867, for instance, women took their equal share. Since work was based on Ngwato cultural gender roles, or division of labour, the men did all the felling and sawing of timber. They also contributed by giving cattle and in loaning oxen for the work, while women carried poles and cut grass for roofing and thatching etc. It is however, surprising that when it came to the opening celebrations, the missionary's concern was only with the attendance of old and influential men. Their remarks interested John MacKenzie so much that they found access into his records in his books and correspondence as illustrated in a latter chapter. Women's responses or comments were neglected. The only mention regarding women was in reference to their attire - as to whether they were dressed in European or 'heathen' dress. There were however, some hopeful signs that their situation was not completely neglected. There are some very exciting recorded responses of women to Christianity which could be utilised to develop a positive female past. Price, for instance, told a story of one of the Tswana woman, saying:

'She is an intelligent and altogether interesting, character - 'God' she said 'took away the light of my body but gave light to my soul.'⁷⁷⁸

The fact that ceremonies such as the **Thapelo Ya Pula** (rain prayers) and the general recognition of Christianity among the BaNgwato was a male affair, meant that political and religious power domains still revolved around the male leadership. It was, at the **Kgotla** that Khama declared Christianity a national 'custom', thus making it part of his political and religious power domains. To John MacKenzie, the **Modimo** of Christianity and Khama had become one. He wrote saying:

'all this was because they were under the laws of Jesus Christ, and did not follow the desires of their own hearts. Therefore, let no one tempt them or hinder them in God's service in the future; but rather let them learn to love and trust the God of Khama and Khamane.'⁷⁷⁹

The effects of Christianity and Europeanization were greater on women than they were on men. Some

⁷⁷⁷Roger Price to L.M.S., July 11, 1867, (Shoshong) SOAS: B34 F3 JA; John Mackenzie to L.M.S., January 27, 1868, (Shoshong) SOAS: B35 F1 JA.

⁷⁷⁸Roger Price to L.M.S., December 5, 1868, (Logageng), SOAS: B35 F1 JA.

⁷⁷⁹John Mackenzie to L.M.S., September 2, 1872, (Shoshong) SOAS: B37 F1 JA.

of the areas which drastically affected women were politics, education and other social matters.

ii). Effects of Missionary Education on Women

More important than any other factor, in encouraging the women to evolve, was education. Literary education, however, was largely controlled by missionaries and modelled on European principles. The missionaries saw it as an important means of winning converts. The effort was primarily directed towards men, who were consequently expected to win their families and people to Christianity. It was for this reason that literary education became part and parcel of the missionaries' programme. Education was seen as an important auxiliary in the permanence and progress of the Missionary Society's work. Describing their daily mission work at Shoshong Mrs Price said that:

'Three hours of school in the morning, for whoever will come, then an hour(s) writing for the forward scholars in the aft. Then my sewing school, two afts in the week, and R's Sabbath duties besides occasional conversations with the young chiefs, who are intelligent and in earnest to be taught. Then old Sekhomi (sic), too. Ah! he wastes time and will not listen to serious talk.'⁷⁸⁰

Mrs Price found Khama and Kgamane to be 'devoted to the missionaries, and anxious to learn anything they could from them, as well as to help them in every way possible.' Again, she wrote, about the role model set by the former:

'... setting the example in anxiety for teaching, nearly all the young men followed suit, and books were in great demand. We were in no need of boys for work - such as they were - quite raw - but humble and teachable.'⁷⁸¹

No matter how great the commitment of Ngwato women for education was, Mrs Price still did not recognise their efforts. Of Kgamane's wonderful talent and intelligent scholarship, determination, perseverance, application and comprehension she, for instance, wrote saying:

'He becomes perfectly unconscious of the presence of a single individual when once he gets his lesson. The other day I knocked an ink-bottle over his book. It did not happen to blot the part he was busy at, so answering abstractedly "yes" when I apologised, he continued saying his lesson loud in the same breath and louder still - quite unconscious of my presence or of the ink - bottle rolling along, or the blot either. He is surpassed in his studies by two of the younger scholars, but is decidedly talented and is shrewd, curious and quick in observing and knowing different characters. The traders find him too quick and inquisitive to suit them, and avoid him whenever they can in business.'

She further writes saying:

'Khame again is very different. He lacks application and talent (in) both being quite behind the others in school - or I shd. say in Roger's first class - but he has a good deal of common sense and a beautiful steadiness, firmness and decision of character, combined with an easy, mirthful gentle disposition, who cause(s) him to be

⁷⁸⁰ Long, U., (ed.) (1956) op cit, p.134-5.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, pp.77, 119.

universally beloved. He is a friend to us in our loneliness here, as missionaries.⁷⁸²

This was one the earliest first-hand, impressions of missionary education in Shoshong, offering a glimpse of the response of the Ngwato people to it. It is however disappointing to find that it represents a one-sided view, which thinks nothing about the position of women or analyzing education in favour of males. Mrs Price, as a woman herself, was in a powerful position to give a balanced view of the general status of education as a whole.⁷⁸³ From other related sources which we have already cited, in chapter two, it is evident that young women like the daughters of Tshukudu, Gobitsamang and Baitlhopi, married to Sekgoma's two sons, Khama and Kgamane respectively, were among the first converts of Christianity, and were equally zealous about learning to read and write. In fact, as a missionary rule, they would have been expected to attend missionary reading and writing classes before they could be accepted into full Church membership. Reading, in particular, was a priority for the missionaries, because it enabled their converts to read and communicate Scriptures to their families, friends and neighbours. The spread of Christianity in Ngwatoland, as we have seen in chapters four and five, largely resulted from this important factor. It was those evangelists who could read and write effectively that made the greatest impact on the growth of Christianity. This was crucial to the missionaries because properly trained Christians were expected to render almost immeasurable help. Whenever religious instruction was provided it led to large mass movement towards Christianity, resulting from multitudes of young people bearing Christian identity. With this being the case, there can be no reason not to believe that women converts were also compelled by this important missionary policy. This obviously points to the missionary's neglect of women's presence and efforts in their educational scheme and consequently as deliberate (or unconsciously for some) bias against them in their reports, correspondence and general histories. As part of this bias against women, the missionaries associated their mission's success with the political power of the Ngwato male officials.

In 1895 Edwin Lloyd, testified to the fact that their choice of evangelists followed the expectation of the Ngwato male dominated society when he wrote that:

'The evangelists come, as a rule from good families; some of them are headmen and councillors in their own tribe. The position of evangelists is regarded as an honourable one. Unfortunately, the work of a schoolmaster is not thought so highly of as we would wish.'⁷⁸⁴

Christian Ngwato men, of the nineteenth and twentieth century, wanted to see continuity with the past,

⁷⁸²Ibid, pp.144-5.

⁷⁸³. See chapter 7 for Price image as a teacher.

⁷⁸⁴. *Founders Week Convention Report*, 'The Centenary of the London Missionary Society', Sept. 1895, p.171-2.

whereby both the religious and secular spheres of life were under their domains. This is why, as illustrated in chapter three, Khama and his inner circle of chiefs and headmen, as well as the former traditional **dingaka** immediately took hold of the Church leadership and only allowed men to conduct such public rites as **Thapelo Ya Pula** and other agricultural thanksgiving ceremonies as it was in the past. They were opposed to any new establishment which separated the political from religious domain. This was why an attempt by missionaries to develop a separate religious domain led to conflicts.⁷⁸⁵ The Ngwato officials, who were all men, used the missionary and the Christian Church as an instrument through which they could retain their spiritual control over women.

It also has to be stressed that while the main purpose of the missionary education, fulfilled the aspirations of the Ngwato male dominated society, it, in many ways, remained foreign and imperial in its nature and function. The missionaries demanded that the spiritual and the secular be separate domains, which contradicted the Ngwato cultural approach, where all forms of life were part and parcel of the other. Although Comaroff and Comaroff seemed to be undermining or unaware of the role played by the missionary education, in strengthening male power and position in general, their observation was a valid one. They wrote:

‘... advancing the cause of Christianity as they did, the Wesleyans, like other missionaries in Africa eroded not only the spiritual aspect of the chieftainship but its entire foundation. In seeking to restore religious authority to God, they drove a wedge between two dimensions of power and legitimacy which, for Tswana, were indissoluble... the unravelling of puso (government) - and its division into discrete domains of religion and politics, chapel and chiefship - engendered a new pluralism. For whatever intention of the mission, its converts remade the political sociology of the Church in their own image. Around it they created another centre, with its own leadership, power relations and symbolic resources; and, in so doing, they expressed in Christian idiom long-standing tensions surrounding the chieftainship.’⁷⁸⁶

So then, the missionary type of education, which was western inclined and divisive, was accepted by the Ngwato officials on their own terms, as an instrument through which they could consolidate their cultural positions. Khama used both the literary education, provided by the missionaries and the Church teaching offered to his people, to strengthen his own spiritual sources of kingly authority and thus uniting the religious with the political domain. So, the dominance of men, as in the past, remained a symbol and source of power, invested with immense authority and having the capacity, for instance, to ask for rain through the **Thapelo Tsa Pula** services.

The LMS *Founder's Week Convention Report* of September 1895, shows that the original aim of the Directors, in making education a vital component of their missionary work, was to give the whole

⁷⁸⁵See chapter 4.

⁷⁸⁶Comaroff J, & Comaroff, J.L., (1976), *Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa*, pp.4-5.

gospel in order to build a whole person, that is, a whole humanity made up of men and women. The report regretted the change of direction saying that:

‘There appears to have been an instinctive feeling that the whole man was touched by the message, and schools were commenced at the beginning. In fact, one of our regrets now is that in certain directions there is so little response to the effort made along the lines of elementary education.’⁷⁸⁷

I suppose that when the Directors spoke of ‘the whole man ... touched by the message, and schools’, they meant both men and women. But the missionaries seemed to give an impression that education was men only. However, it has to be mentioned that, although, Mrs Price in her journals neglects the response of women to missionary education, she on the other hand, recognised the importance of providing a special education for women, by providing them with sewing classes.⁷⁸⁸ She realised that the education directed towards women needed to equip them for life whilst also providing secular education better fitted for the battle of life, rather than just inculcating importance in the moral and religious training of women. This approach would have been essential in the development of a whole woman. Mr. A.L. Allan, when presenting a paper to the missionaries gathered for the Centenary in September 1895, explained it as follows:

‘The idea of duty here, as I conceive it’ is not that which is based on obligation - not that which has its counterpart aright on the part of the convert to claim or demand fulfilment. There may be, and no doubt there are, times and circumstances in which converts and their children may be said to have a moral claim or right involving a corresponding obligation or duty on the part of the Missionary Society.’⁷⁸⁹

The Ngwato type of education demanded that the society be responsible for educating its young, that is, both males and females. Although women played a vital part in this, as we have seen in section A of this chapter, they were not recognised as equal partners in the training of the young. So, then, by neglecting to mention the response of women’s involvement in their schools, in their histories and reports missionaries were, to some extent, behaving like the Ngwato tradition, which refused to acknowledge and admit that women were as equally capable as men to learn to read and write.

The establishment of the Moffat Institution, at Shoshong in 1872, clearly demonstrated this bias against women. The application requirements made no accommodation for women to enter the Seminary for training. One of the important requirements for admission for instance stated that:

‘That other things being equal, suitably married applicants be preferred and that their wives and children accompany them to the institution.’⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁷ *Founder's Week Convention Report*, Sept. 1895, p123.

⁷⁸⁸ Long, U., (ed) (1956) *op cit*, pp.134-5.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.123.

⁷⁹⁰ John Mackenzie to LMS, April 15, 1872, (Shoshong), SOAS: B37 F1 JA.

The factors influencing the choice of candidates were exclusively favourable to men. In fact, only men were being invited to apply for training in the missionary religious institutions; thus completely leaving women out of consideration. In doing so, the missionaries failed to realise that there were many open opportunities through which indigenous trained women would have facilitated the course of Christianity, amongst their own people. Instead of pursuing academic studies, women were expected to continue doing their traditional household duties: taking care of their husbands and bearing and nurturing children; cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood and so on.

This six of the pioneering candidates at the Moffat Seminary were therefore all men. In fact, there was never a single woman admitted to the seminary at Shoshong during its existence. In their selection of candidates, for training and choice of evangelists and school masters, the missionaries were influenced by the European notions which strictly associated Church leadership and ministry with men. The Ngwato male dominated culture, also did much to reinforce those conceptions. Kgamane was selected and given a place at the seminary because of his status as son of King Sekgoma. Regarding his admission, John MacKenzie stated that:

‘It will be an advantage to the cause of the Gospel in the interior that a person in Khamane’s social position, should have the advantage of a good education.’⁷⁹¹

The fact that the missionaries were confident of the importance of their education, in spreading the Christian message, is evidently undebatable, but the problem is that they failed to discover how best this could have been effected. One of the most important factors which was ignored was the role of women, which would obviously have facilitated a rapid spread and growth of the indigenous type of Christianity. While MacKenzie, who was the principal of the Moffat Institution, acknowledged that missionary methods were varied, he did not realise that the training of women would be one of the most crucial approaches. In this regard, he had earlier argued that:

‘Every Christian believes in the spread and final triumph of Christianity. Various opinions are held to the methods of securing this end, and different views have been explained as to the capacity for improvement for certain races.’⁷⁹²

I strongly believe that if the missionaries discovered this point, they would not have failed to be impressed by it, especially with large communities of their converts drawn from the women, when the earliest missionaries first arrived. The Ngwato culture saw the influence of religious teaching on children by mothers and grandmothers to be a crucial contribution to their development. Through this, past religious experiences of the tribe was easily reproduced in these young children and grandchildren. In Ngwato home, it was the mother or the grandmother, (or both) who taught the child about the past and life situations in general. It was impossible for this function to occur without the intelligent help

⁷⁹¹Ibid.

⁷⁹²Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, Preface, p.v.

of the mothers and grandmothers. But in a multitude of cases, in both missionary and Ngwato education, the contributions of mothers were ignored as far as the religious training of their children was concerned. Due to the notion that women's place was at home, the majority of them were unable to read, which made it impossible for them to sufficiently instruct others in literary education.

It is worth noting that right from the formation of the LMS, in September 1795, the founders, due to the prevailing notions about women, never thought of the latter playing an outstanding role in mission work. In actual fact, there was a public outcry, against the horrible dangers that presumably awaited women as 'weak vessels' out there in 'dark heathen lands'. When in September Edwin Lloyd addressed missionaries, gathered for the LMS centenary, he sounded the same general fears saying:

'Think of the perils to your missionaries! you think of perils from wild beasts; of perils from fever, dysentery, and other African diseases; of perils from wild and savage tribes among whom we go; and these perils are often present. but I now refer not to these, but to far greater and more urgent perils - perils to the spiritual life of your missionaries, surrounded as they are by a degraded people bound by the potent chains of superstition and evil customs, and innumerable inducements to all that is degrading, selfish, and vile.'⁷⁹³

When women were eventually allowed to accompany their missionary husbands, they were not given a proper official role to play, such as evangelising, educating or generally helping the women, nor were they recognised as valuable assets to the people. They were confined to the home and expected to devote themselves to their families and their traditional household responsibilities. They were to help in promoting the missionary, so that he lived an exemplary life. In the convention cited above Lloyd testified regarding this, saying:

'The family life of the mission houses has, undoubtedly, a splendid influence upon our people. The wives of your missionaries seek to elevate and refine the women and girls by holding services for them, and teaching them to sew, knit and do many useful things.'⁷⁹⁴

One of the earliest examples of this sort of conception, in relation to the role of women in mission circles, comes from the life of Mary Smith, whose parents lived in Dukinfield, near Manchester. They were the employer, of Robert Moffat. It was there that Robert and Mary met and fell in love. They both became possessed with the longing to be missionaries. They wished to marry and work together among the 'heathen'. Mary's parents, fearing the dangers which might befall their daughter, were against the whole idea of their marriage. Therefore, Moffat sailed to Africa on his own as an agent of the LMS. This however did not discourage Mary. She remained faithful to both Robert and her desires of becoming a missionary. Two years later her parents consented to both her wishes. She sailed at once

⁷⁹³. *Founders' Week Convention Report*, Sept, 1895, p.168.

⁷⁹⁴. *Founders' Week Convention*, Sept. 1895, p.168.

to Cape town where they were married on 27th December 1819.⁷⁹⁵

Although the Directors of the LMS did not officially recognise Mary Moffat as a missionary in her own right, she contributed immensely in developing the Kudumane mission. In 1829, she began sewing classes for women and mothers who manifested a great desire to learn.⁷⁹⁶ This led to a rapid increase of reading and writing abilities, as well as to Church growth. Sewing and needle work remained the most favourably attended activity. The 1838 report,⁷⁹⁷ for instance, shows that there were over fifty female adults and girls who regularly attended the sewing classes and that progress was satisfactory. The school clothes were being locally produced to substitute the indigenous dress, which was seen as unfavourable to Christianity.⁷⁹⁸ It is very interesting to find that Tlhaping women were, through this, motivated, as the traditional economy was, to be self-reliant. They would purchase skins of animals and prepare them almost as soft as cloth, and make them into jackets, trousers and other gowns. Mr. Moffat wrote that:

‘A man might be seen in a jacket with but one sleeve, because the other was not finished, or he lacked material to complete it. Another in a leathern or duffed jacket, with the sleeves of different colours, or of fine printed cottons.’⁷⁹⁹

These women successfully made other things such as candles and soaps from tallow, rags and other local raw materials.

The spread of Christianity amongst the Tswana in general began to create an atmosphere which enabled women to develop a new image of themselves. They began to find ways of penetrating the male dominated Christianity, but still operated within the Ngwato cultural structures, which were themselves formerly dominated by men. Through this woman began to immensely transform and mould historical events. This change of course began insignificantly, as early as the 1816s, among the Tlhaping of the Kudumane mission. It's outstanding leader here was Queen Mahuto, the wife of King Moremi Molehabangwe, who greatly influenced the way Christianity was received by the Tlhaping people and indeed other Tswana peoples.

⁷⁹⁵ Moffat, R., (1842), op. cit; Long, U., (ed). (1956), op. cit, pp.4-5. Mrs Price herself was Robert Moffat's daughter.

⁷⁹⁶ *London Missionary Society Reports*, 1823, pp84-6.

⁷⁹⁷ *London Missionary Society Report*, 1838, pp.99-101.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.101.

⁷⁹⁹ Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.506.

The very earliest missionaries, Messrs Evans and Hamilton,⁸⁰⁰ found that for effective negotiations in relation to the preparation of their settlement to proceed, it was necessary to gain her favour, by bringing lots of presents for her. Her influential position, in a society mainly dominated by men, could not therefore be taken for granted nor ignored. The European goods brought by the missionaries to appease her were a recognition of the influential position that she held. She, therefore, seemed to have had a say, either directly or indirectly in the political, social and religious matters of her community.

Another example of the ongoing process of change, which occurred during this period, is reflected in a conversation between the Tlhaping women and their missionary, Robert Moffat. The point under consideration was the fact that husbands left all the heavy jobs such as house-building, fetching of firewood, cultivation of crops, harvesting etc, to their wives. Regarding this, Moffat tells us that his remark 'set them (women) all into a roar of laughter', in the presence of their husbands. In response to this Queen Mahuto plainly stated:

'... that the plan, though hopeless, was a good one, as she often thought our custom was much better than theirs. It was reasonable that women should attend to household affairs, and the lighter parts of labour, while man, wont to boast of his superior strength, should employ his energy in more labours occupations; adding, she wished I should give their husbands medicine to make them do the work.'⁸⁰¹

This was a revolutionary comment, expressing dissatisfaction, on behalf of the women folk. What the BaNgwato needed was not imposition of alien customs, but to relate to the message of the Gospel which addressed every area of life within their own culture.

Among the BaKwena of King Sechele, women were, in the 1840s, also adopting new approaches to their day - to - day situations. Sechele, having become zealous for Christianity, was not only assisting Livingstone with conducting services, he also preached and devotedly gave himself to the studying of the Scriptures.⁸⁰² In 1848, as part of the preparation for his baptism, he decided to 'put away all his wives but one.'⁸⁰³ Livingstone's diary of 1848 is revealing in this regard. It reads:

'Sunday 6th August. Sechele remained as spectator at the celebration of the Lord's supper, and when we retired he asked me how he ought to act in reference to his superfluous wives, as he greatly desired to conform to the will of Christ, be baptised, and observe his ordinance. Advised him to do according to what he saw written in God's book, but to treat them gently, for they had sinned in ignorance and if driven

⁸⁰⁰Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.67-9.

⁸⁰¹Moffat, R., op cit, p.252.

⁸⁰²Livingstone, D., (1857) op cit, p.15.

⁸⁰³Ibid.

away harshly might be lost eternally.

Monday 7th. A day of great commotion in the town. All seemed to be in perplexity. Complete cessation of work. Women remained at home, although on every other lawful day they are seen going to the gardens in crowds. The men seemed downcast and dismayed. A large meeting in the Khotla. Many spoke fiercely, so much as to surprise the chief himself...'

The decision by Sechele had led to a fierce protest movement of women, because they saw this as an unreasonable action, which carried numerous consequences to the future of economically dependent women. In *Some Letters from Livingstone, 1840-72*, Livingstone says that: 'Not a single woman was seen going to her garden.' This shows that these women took the matter very seriously.⁸⁰⁴ This was a new happening and probably the first incident in Tswana history, whereby women defied the authority at that level, by refusing to conduct their daily duties. In their opposition, to what they saw as injustice to the women folk, they won the support of some of the most prominent headmen, which included the fathers of the women abandoned by Sechele. There was so much pressure that the King backed down over some of his resolutions. The conservative men, in particular, had accused Livingstone of bewitching their King so much that he had been made useless and unable to conduct the rain making rites.

The establishment of Christianity among the Batawana also shows a similar trend; that women were not as silent and inactive in societal issues as has been portrayed by both the missionary sources and the Tswana culture. It is evident that the missionary and Ngwato male dominated culture tried to push them into the background.

When a Ngwato Church delegation, comprising of Mr and Mrs Hepburn and three indigenous evangelists: Mokgwati, Khukwe and Diphukwe, was sent by Khama to establish a mission at the Lake Ngami in 1877, it was King Moremi's mother who played a leading role in favour of Christianity.⁸⁰⁵ It was through her long connections with LMS missionaries, such as David Livingstone, Roger Price, John MacKenzie, and Helmore, that it became possible for her to urge her son to send messengers to Khama to ask for European teachers. When these teachers, who were friends of Livingstone, finally arrived, she was greatly delighted. Hepburn wrote of her:

'She was so much in earnest about learning to read, that when the others were inclined to laugh, she took her book and sat down by herself to try to master its mysteries.'⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰⁴ Chamberlin, D., ed) (1940) op cit, p.120.

⁸⁰⁵ Hepburn, J.D., (1895) op cit, p.44.

⁸⁰⁶ . Hepburn to L.M.S., November 16, 1877, (Shoshong) SOAS: B39 F1 JC.

It is also worth noting that this woman had already contributed a lot to the missionaries and the LMS in general. She was the one who took care of the Helmore children and nursed Roger Price after the Kololo disaster, which had claimed the lives of a number of Europeans and Tswana Christians, during the reign of Letsholathebe.⁸⁰⁷

Among the BaNgwato, historical evidence also shows that women, as represented by Sekgoma's mother, sometimes penetrated that world dominated by men. When Livingstone, for instance, sought permission to pass through the Ngwatoland, on his way to the Lake Ngami, Sekgoma's mother objected to the request and made things very difficult for him. Livingstone wrote that:

‘Sekomi’ mother, who possess great influence over him, refused permission, because she had not been propitiated. This produced a fresh message; and the most honourable man in the Bakwain tribe, next to Sechele, was sent with an ox for both Sekomi and his mother. This, too, was met by refusal.’⁸⁰⁸

Another example occurred when John MacKenzie was resident missionary at Shoshong. His methods and approaches to the Ngwato culture and custom had resulted in a fierce conflict between the Ngwato Christians and non-Christians, as illustrated in chapter two. Sekgoma's mother was very bitter and influenced her son and his advisers to work against the missionary. She argued for tough measures to be taken against MacKenzie if the young men of the town were to be won back from Christianity, which she saw as working against Ngwato culture and custom. Together with some headmen, she suggested a thorough beating, and the stripping of the missionary of his property, before sending him away from the town. Although the measure was not implemented, she continued her fierce attack and threats. She accused the Ngwato men of weakness and cowardice and said that this could not stop only one foreigner ruling and ruining the town. She threatened to do something about it herself, if the situation persisted. This instigated the old men of Shoshong, who thereafter disgraced the missionary and called him by very disreputable names.⁸⁰⁹ It is evident, therefore, that even where Christianity and Ngwato culture had strengthened the position of men and justified that male spirituality and ignored women's spiritual potential, women were now forcing their way into those structures, which were once against them. The exclusion of women from the missionary training programmes, implies that they were thought to be less capable, compared to their male counterparts. This limited view of female potentiality failed to encourage women to transcend their physicality and focus their attention on Christ's love for humanity. In the following pages we find that, towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the

⁸⁰⁷Mackenzie, W.D., (1922) op cit, pp.11-17; Chamberlin, D., ed) (1940) op cit, p.271; Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp. 180-5.

⁸⁰⁸Livingstone, D., (1857) op cit, pp.45-6.

⁸⁰⁹. J. Mackenzie to L.M.S., July 3, 1866, (Shoshong) B34 F1 JB.

twentieth century, both Ngwato and European women living at Shoshong, Palapye, Serowe and the surrounding villages, began to demonstrate the capability to theologise and interpret their experiences to their environment. This approach contributed to the growth of the Ngwato Church and Christianity.

6.12. Summary

The overall observation of this chapter is that the early Ngwato Christianity did not hold a hopeful future for women, because it was heavily dominated by male ideas, images and symbols. The analysis and the approach of this type of Christianity primarily saw women as women, and not as Christians.

The Ngwato male conceptions of religious and political power structure remained a significant obstacle to the lives of women which was shown by their response to Christianity and general day - to - day living and the way in which they were viewed in the propagation of Christianity.

Although Christianity contributed to the rapid weakening of the old Ngwato cultural structures, it continued to strengthen the position of men and created new power structures, within Christianity, for them. Generally speaking therefore, conditions in this missionary era indicate that centuries - old traditions and ingrained practices continued to govern male - female relationships. Patriarchal heritage was still a reality, even within the Christian community, where sex -stereotyped views, based upon traditional norms and values, prevailed. The prevalence of this patriarchal thinking was soundly supported by both the cultural and missionary Christianity and literature, which for years had acted as its source of survival.

However, there was an undercurrent movement, which began to break into open hostility and to compel the development of a new image for women.

Fig.41 Women at Work:



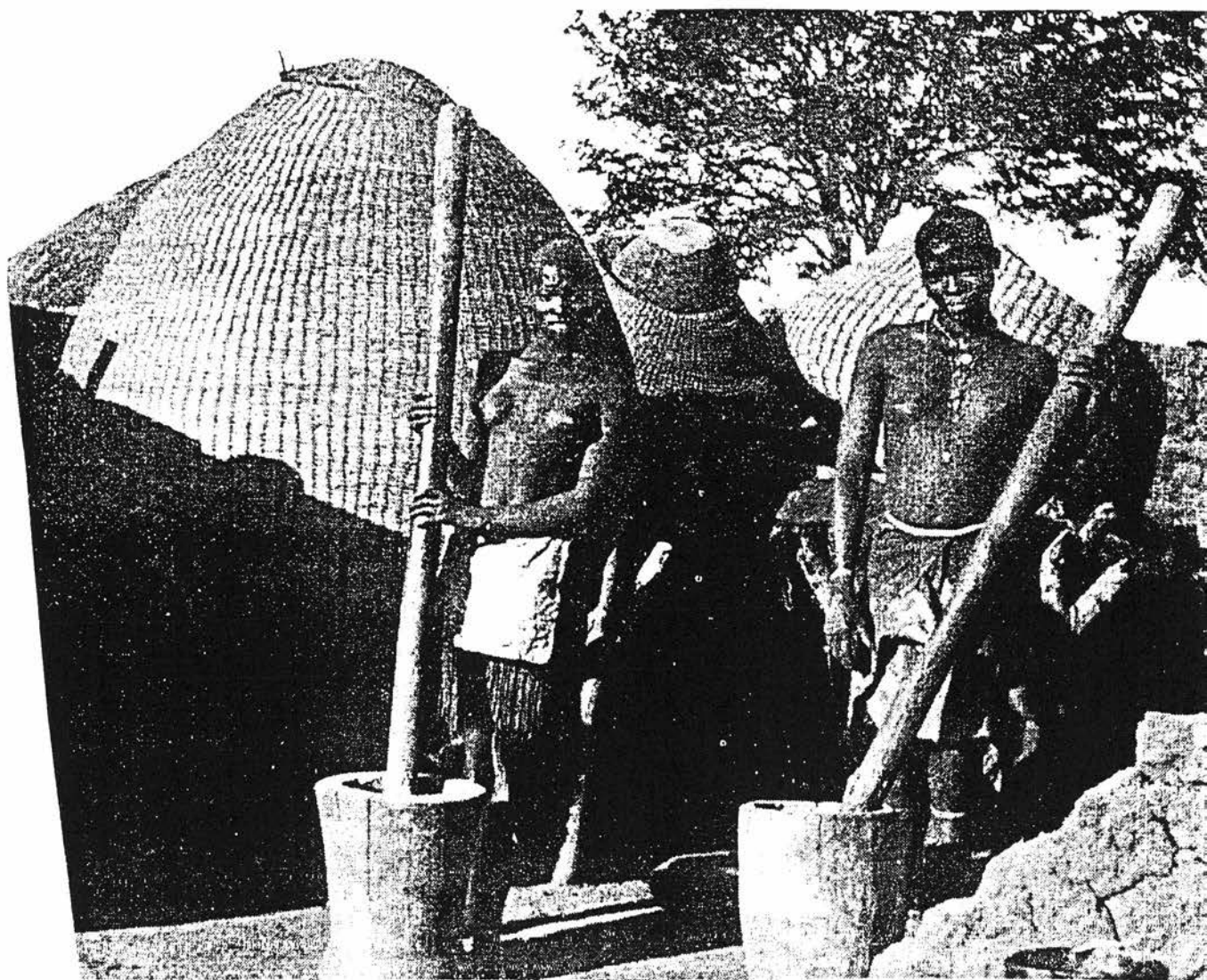
Women winnowing grain at Serowe (Africa Pictures, op. cit).



Baskets: receptacles for storing sorghum and mealies.



Woman sweeping the family compound.



Ngwato girls grinding maize in Serowe (Mockford (1950) facing p.139).



Traditional crafts: basketry - used to carry anything from grain to clothing and foodstuffs; pottery - note **bojalwa** (traditional beer) in an earthly traditional pot, the bigger pot being used for the same purpose as the big basket, as receptacles for storing sorghum and mealies. Also note the women passing the skills to the young.



Fig.42

The introduction of the plough, pulled by oxen, meant that men had to help with ploughing which, prior to this, was seen as a female role (T. Tlou, (1984) p124).



Fig.43

Locally produced dressses, jackets and shoes. Lots of ingenuity and originality in design and style (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS).

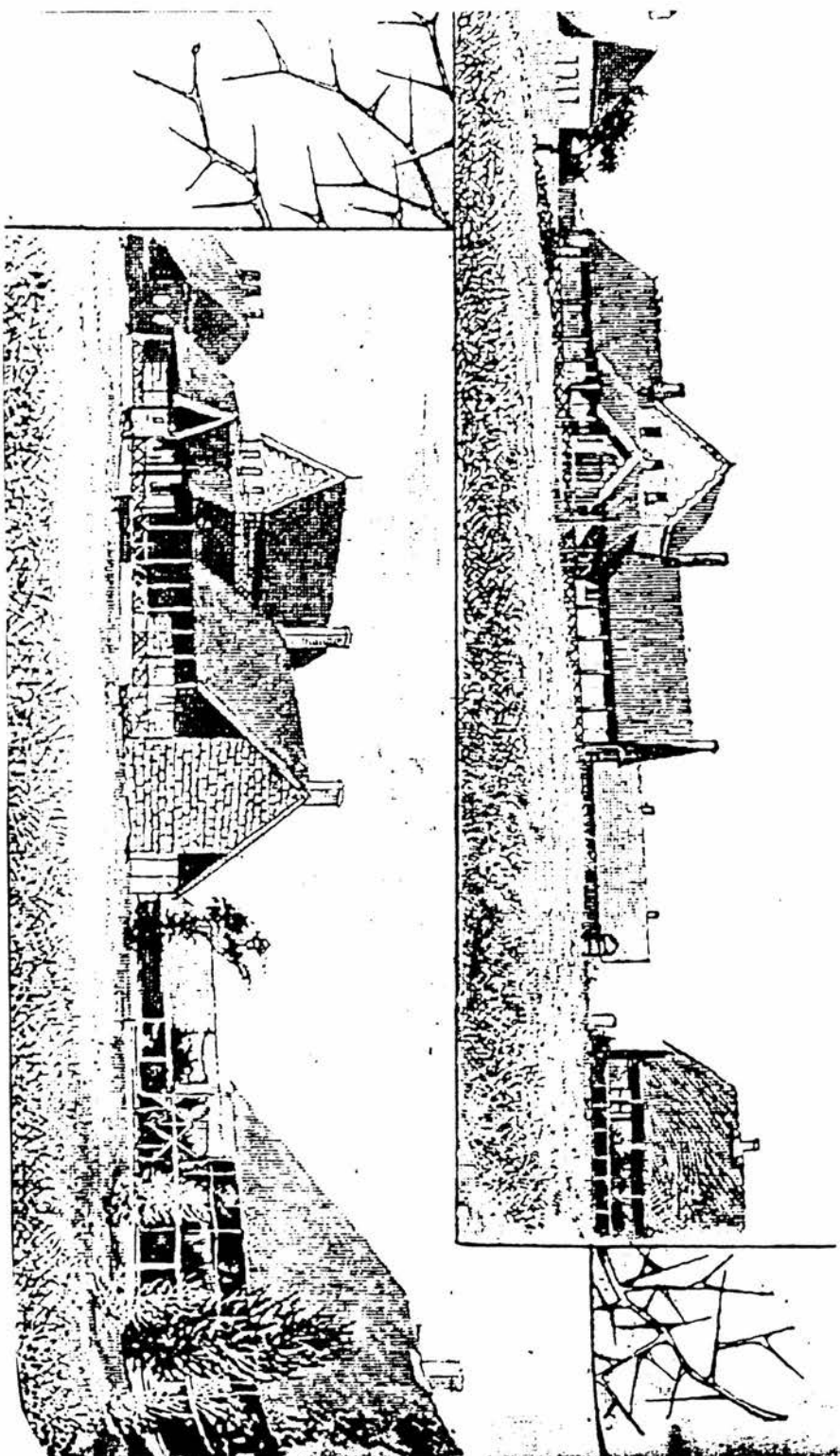


Fig. 44

The Moffat Institution built by LMS for the training of evangelists and school teachers (from T. Tlou, 1984).



Fig.45

Three daughters and a niece of Khama, pupils of Mrs Hepburn
(from J.D. Hepburn, (1895), p.41).

Chapter Seven

7.0. The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Female Experiences in a Changing Society

7.1. Introduction

The underlying theme of this chapter is change. It especially deals with those factors of change which drastically affected the crucial structures of women's life style. The nineteenth and twentieth century European forces began to transform the Ngwato political, economic, social and religious structures. Writing in 1871, John MacKenzie made a contrast between the Tswana people living in mission centres and those in remote regions, saying:

'... occasional strangers from the interior stand in the background in their karosses and gaze with mute wonder on the scene,' while 'Most of the men belonging to the station wear European clothing; the trousers, however, are frequently of skin, tanned and made by themselves.'

He also went on to point out that many people, especially those residing where there was a European presence, were by this time:

'... respectably dressed' in 'coats and gowns of many colours, and wide-awake hats', and that 'Most of the women wear a handkerchief (or two) tied tightly round the head, and it is counted rather elegant to have one coloured, while the other is black silk. Ladies' hats were patronized by a few; and there seemed to be worn on the bare head or over a handkerchief rather ingeniously folded so as to imitate long hair in a net. Shoes are now neatly enough made, somehow after the fashion of "brogues" in Scotland; but stockings are regarded as equally superfluous with gloves.'⁸¹⁰

The force of change led to the emergence of women seeking and subsequently directing their attention to the centre of Ngwato public life and activity. While, historically the methods of selecting the Church leadership excluded women in favour of men, for the first time the former began not only to penetrate the inner circle of Ngwato Church leadership, but also featured in political power struggles and revolutions. This developed to the extent that, in the 1920s, women were even initiating and influencing political conflicts and changes. However female and male missionaries seemed to operate differently. Despite this, the male missionaries and the Ngwato men generally agreed as to what should be the role and position of women. For instance, the former at times inspired women to revolt against those Ngwato customs, which they saw as an obstacle to the spread of Christianity.

The acceptance and introduction of Christianity among the BaNgwato did not only exclude the views and opinions of Ngwato women but was also seen in terms of the Ngwato tradition and heritage, which

⁸¹⁰Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.72-3.

was strictly dominated by male leadership, especially the male aristocrat. Therefore, the close connection, between the aims of the missionary Christianity and the traditional socio-political expectations, had inhibiting measures on the lives of women. The introduction of Christianity and other more strictly European matters of political, social and economic life began to weaken the Ngwato cultural structures. In 1910 Lloyd wrote from Shoshong saying:

‘The women too were finding their feet, and are not so ready to be imposed upon ... no longer will she be married to any men chosen by her father.’⁸¹¹

In 1913 Lloyd deliberately encouraged women to revolt against men’s refusal to help in drawing water during the drought period.⁸¹² It is clear from the LMS sources of this period that women were not as silent as often portrayed by the general run of histories both in the past and more recently. The women in this period were making deliberate efforts to improve their economic conditions and social status and also to address political and religious issues.

To adequately investigate the effects of these forces, on the experiences of the Ngwato women, we find that three areas stand out above all others and it is the changes brought about in these areas which we will study: the women’s work role; family role; and public role. These aspects, taken together, cover most knowledgeably the experience of women in a changing society.

The first subject under consideration is social change, which mainly affected Ngwato marriage practices, by the imposition of European civil marriage laws. This had an adverse effect on traditional family structures. The second topic for investigation is the introduction of European commerce and the economy, which had a drastic impact on the economic position and work roles of women. The rapidity of this process was facilitated by the combined efforts of the colonial administration and the work of missionaries, who each had their expectations of the BaNgwato. In the third instance, we will also consider the role played by three groups of women: the missionary wives, the lady missionaries and last, but not least, the Ngwato women. In spite of the European superiority complex, which influenced and moulded some of the female European women, we find that their contribution to the work of women was invaluable. It was they who led the way for the Ngwato women. It is also worth noting that the attitude of the European missionaries like that of the male missionaries, to Ngwato culture and women varied from person to person and over time.

⁸¹¹. *Reports of the L.M.S.*, 4/1 Shoshong for 1907, E.Lloyd, 1908.

⁸¹²*Ibid*, 5/1 Serowe, 1913, A. Jennings, 1914.

7.2. Effects of Christianity and Westernization

The new influences came through four main channels; the imposition of colonial law; the evangelistic efforts of the missionaries; the bringing of the BaNgwato into the orbit of modern trade and industry which led to the South African Labour migration; and education, which also played a vital role. The growth of Christianity, after its official recognition by Khama, substantially altered Ngwato culture and customs. One of its outstanding features was that it grew as a 'religion' while strengthening male cultural positions. In some cases, Christianity made them stronger than they were before.

i). Sociological Changes

One of the marriage structures, which came under severe attack from the missionaries, was polygamy. Converts falling under this category were denied Church membership and related benefits. This familial institution also faced tremendous pressures and opposition from colonial civil law. In this way, the ecclesiastical marriage policies of the missionaries, which were aimed at creating marriage communities based on monogamy, were strongly supported by the Protectorate Colonial Administrators. In order to reinforce the colonial marriage law, in 1896, the Cape High Commissioner for South Africa issued a Proclamation which made it compulsory and 'necessary for any marriage celebrated by a Minister of Religion in the Protectorate, to be registered in the usual way', with a duplicate of the original register to be sent to him, within twenty-one days. The 'usual way' referred to here is the colonial marriage practice. This proclamation failed to benefit or protect the women, who were supposed to be its targets and simply transferred the power to divorce people, from the **Kgotla** institution to the colonial courts. It also made it easier for Church members, in particular, to choose their own spouses, rather than submit to traditional arrangement.⁸¹³ This meant that the decisions concerning such matters as divorce, which were before this under the authority of the King, passed to both the missionaries and the colonial administrators.

Following the 1896 declaration, Willoughby announced that such marriages only, were to be celebrated in the Church in future. This raised much opposition among the Ngwato old men, because it curtailed their prerogatives. This protest resulted in a decline of marriages in 1898. There were only sixteen marriages celebrated under the new law that year.⁸¹⁴ Before this Proclamation the number of marriages was very high indeed. In May 7, 1894, for instance, after only three months in Palapye, Miss Young had already witnessed six weddings.⁸¹⁵ Khama also discouraged polygamy, although he

⁸¹³. W.C. Willoughby, 'Review of Five Years', p.21, September 23, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

⁸¹⁴W.C. Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 23, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 FB.

⁸¹⁵Alice Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JC.

insisted on the persistence of certain features of the Ngwato traditional marriage practice, such as the political marriage alliances. Although Hepburn had worked in co-operation with Ngwato officials and deacons, in sanctifying Christian marriages and in dealing with divorce matters of the Church, he insisted on the fact that the Ngwato marriages had to be conducted in accordance with 'European' civil law, imposing upon the couple a series of European obligations. He saw these foreign codes of ideas and conduct as the standard by which Christianity had to be assessed. He wrote:

'It will of course require the growth of many, many years before it attains the beauty and strength of our high standard of Christian morality.'⁸¹⁶

These changes in marriage law were not inspired by the missionaries' oppressive measures on women, but through their Christian zeal, mixed with their eurocentric attitudes. In spite of this, (as shown in chapter 5) the co-operation between the missionary and Ngwato Christians led to an increased number of marriages in the 1900s.⁸¹⁷ In 1904 Albert Jennings decided not to admit to Church membership those who had not been married according to Colonial law. He began to re-marry those Church members who had already been wedded according to Tswana practice, as well as performing marriage sacraments for casual Church enquirers and travelled to the outstations for the same purpose. The effect of such new endeavours resulted in numerous conversions. At one point, in a single whole day Jennings married 26 couples,⁸¹⁸ and in 1904 he reported a large increase in Church membership resulting from marriages. He wrote saying:

'I have married over 60 couples during the past fortnight and have called the banns of another 50 - most of whom were members and candidates of the Church, who had already taken each other according to Sechuana customs.'⁸¹⁹

These marriages were so many that, in the absence of Mr Jennings, Miss Sharp had to be responsible for announcing the banns.⁸²⁰ In eleven years, he had married 655 couples, which led to an increase in the Church roll, from 293 members to 955, of whom 728 were based in Serowe.⁸²¹

The first attempt, by the highest administrative body of the LMS in Bechuanaland, to try to enforce the colonial marriage laws on the Church was in 1896. During February 12th to 23rd of that year, the United District Committee (U.D.C.) meeting held at Hope Fountain had appointed a sub-committee to consider, among other things, African marriage practices in relation to the colonial Bechuanaland laws.

⁸¹⁶ Hepburn, J.D., (1895) op cit, p.118.

⁸¹⁷ W.C. Willoughby (Brighton) to L.M.S., September 23, 1898, SOAS: B55 F2 JB.

⁸¹⁸ Jennings, Serowe, 28th July 1904, SOAS: B64.

⁸¹⁹ A. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., July 28, 1904, SOAS: B64 F1.

⁸²⁰ E.Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., June 30, 1904, SOAS: B64 F1.

⁸²¹ A. Jennings to L.M.S (Serowe), June 8, 1914, SOAS: B76 F3.

Their resolution, resulting from this assessment, is most striking. It disregarded the Tswana etiquette and custom in as far as marriage was concerned and caused severe ill feelings among the Africans.⁸²²

Almost ten years later, in 1910 during a U.D.C. meeting, held from the 18th to the 30th of April at Inyati, the missionaries challenged the terms of the 1895 Annexation Act and its implications for their missionary work in Southern Africa.⁸²³ In both the 1885 establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the 1895 London Agreement between the Tswana Kings and Chamberlain, the former's authority in local matters was to remain unchanged. What worried the missionaries about this decision was the authority on marriage and divorce matters of the Ngwato kingship. This meant that the right to refuse or grant divorce was still vested on Tswana Kings.⁸²⁴ Although this was not a universal Protectorate missionary attitude, the LMS missionaries preferred the Protectorate magistrates to assume the role of being in-charge, rather than having to see their converts turning to a 'heathen' **Kgotla** institution. In 1910, the U.D.C wrote a letter to the Attorney General for the Cape Colony based in Cape Town, asking the Government to clarify the position of the missionaries regarding marriage laws in Bechuanaland Protectorate. They told the Attorney General that they had considerable difficulty in understanding their role as marriage officers in the context of the 1895 Act. They stated that they preferred 'European' marriage laws which they were familiar with:

'It appears to us that any worthless and ignorant Chief has full power to divorce at his mere caprice any member of his tribe who are married under these laws. And further no matter what the sin of one of the married parties against the other he has also power to block the avenues of approach to the divorce courts of the Crown.'⁸²⁵

The most striking questions raised by the committee, in their letter to the Attorney General, were as follows:

- 1). 'Are we obliged to marry natives who have been divorced in the chief's kgotla but not in a British Court of law?'
- 2). 'If marriages are solemnized between such natives, what evidence of divorce is necessary, seeing that the chiefs court is not a court of records?'
- 3). 'Can the chiefs divorce their own subjects at will, or must they hold a public enquiry, and act under some known law?'
- 6). 'May a native who desires a divorce make an original application to a Resident Magistrate in disregard of this chief?'

⁸²²A. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., February 2, 1906, SOAS: B67 F3.

⁸²³A. Jennings (Serowe) to L.M.S., October 23, 1910, SOAS: B71 F4.

⁸²⁴. Schapera, I., (1939), *Married Life in an African Tribe*, pp.15-26

⁸²⁵Ibid.

8). 'Is it possible for poor natives to obtain a divorce from any Court of Record without the payment of the heavy charges common in such cases as have to be taken by Attorneys at High Court and if so what procedures should be adopted in such cases?'

9). 'If a chief who possesses the power of divorce wishes to procure a divorce for himself, or if his wife wishes to procure a divorce from him, to what Court should the case be taken?'

Evidently the missionaries wanted to see the colonial Government using its political power in replacing the Tswana marriage laws with Colonial laws.

The 1910 'Bechuanaland Scheme' created a problem for the BaNgwato, because it put together all Tswana marriages as immoral, without any distinctions between polygamous marriages, concubinage etc. It was only the marriages conducted in accordance with the colonial law which became the criteria for Church membership. To facilitate this, a new Proclamation of 1910 was introduced for the New South African Union. It was, however, not favourable to the LMS missionaries because, although being largely Congregationalist in belief and practice, they held a nonconformist stance. Because of this stance, the Union Act did not recognise their ministerial status, which meant that they could not perform 'legal marriages' at their own stations.⁸²⁶ Therefore, in 1911, the LMS missionaries tried to introduce a new scheme calling for the Union of Churches in southern Africa. As the foregoing chapter shows, they hoped that this move, from a nonconformist stance to a more Congregationalist position, would give them some ecclesiastical recognition as Church ministers.

Despite these changes, the general Ngwato population still largely saw marriage practices in terms of the cultural past, a process which promoted the held view of the inferior status of women. In the early 1920s, the significance of political marriages still played a vital role. Sekgoma II, Khama's eldest son and successor, had married his daughter Oratile to his close political ally, Simon Ratshosa, who had at one point been suspended for adultery, both from the Church, by Lewis and from the leadership of the public school, by Khama.⁸²⁷ Such a form of punishment for a male adulterer was not common in the past, especially if he had fulfilled his other cultural expectations as a father and a member of the society. The effects of Christianity were gradually introducing new challenges for the Ngwato males. Another example, which shows that the effects of missionary activities were beginning to affect some of the key cultural institutions, which historically supported male superiority complex, is the **bogadi** practice. Khama had done much to transform this institution drastically. Roger Price, who was himself a resident missionary among the BaNgwato from 1862 to 1866, wrote in 1884 to the LMS Foreign Secretary about the measures he had taken against the supporters of **bogadi**, saying:

'You will remember that shortly before you arrived here last year I dissolved the

⁸²⁶. *Reports of the L.M.S.*, Jennings, Serowe, 3/9/12.

⁸²⁷. *Reports*, Serowe, 1923, Lewis, 1924.

Church on the question of **bogadi** or wife - purchase. Those who had always been, and were at that time, staunch opponents of the customs, were at once re-enrolled as the nucleus of a new Church. I have reason to believe that the step we took then has had a very solitary effect; and I do not think that question will give any more trouble here for some time to come, perhaps never. At any rate my departure from the laws of admittance into the community will be easily dealt with in the future. For twelve months those who had been the occasion of the disturbance, and others who sympathised with them, were kept out of the Church. At last in October of the present year most of them were received. Some however are still not yet satisfied that they are convinced of their errors. To an Englishman, and especially an English Congregationalist such proceedings must no doubt savour a good deal of ecclesiastical tyranny.⁸²⁸

Missionaries interpreted the decay of these structures as an indication of the benefits and progress of Christianity. Presenting a paper to the 1895 Centenary of the LMS when Khama, Bathoen and Sebele were themselves in London, Edwin Lloyd told the convention that Christianity had created a more respectful and affectionate family environment for Tswana women, who he said were:

'In some (conditions or areas) ... the beast of burden, filling the place of horse or mule for her Lord and master; in others she is the hard-worked field labourer, and a farmer needing additional labour buys another wife.'⁸²⁹

In Lloyd's support, Moffat had also earlier written that polygamy was an obstacle to the spread of the Gospel,⁸³⁰ especially among the women. He wrote, saying:

'Among numerous examples of the Divine grace it ought to be particularly noticed, that polygamy, that formidable barrier to the success of the Gospel among barbarous nations, has in numerous instances given way to the principle sanctioned by Christianity. Submission to this law is the severest test to which a savage can be subjected. When we see a man, for conscience' sake, parting with one or more favourite wives, can we deny him the credit of severity? can we demand a more satisfactory demonstration of the reality of the change? Among the converts at Griqua town was a Mosutu, who had ten wives, and he cheerfully parted with nine, in obedience to the requirements of the Gospel. I believe all the missionaries among the Bechuanas are unanimous in the opinion that not only an elder, but every member of the Church, ought to be "the husband of one wife;" and that the first wife should be considered as having the right claim, unless she voluntarily renounces it, which has sometimes been done. Of course it is understood that such are provided for by the husband as long as they continue unmarried.'⁸³¹

The appointment of Edwin Lloyd to Shoshong, for the second time, to replace Howard Williams, in 1907 resulted in a fierce conflict over Protectorate marriage laws and the Ngwato marriage customs.⁸³²

⁸²⁸Roger Price to L.M.S., December 29, 1884, (Molepolole), SOAS: B42 F1 JD.

⁸²⁹. *Proceedings of the Founders' Week Convention*, op.cit, p.85.

⁸³⁰ Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, pp.251-2.

⁸³¹Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, pp.574-5. Also pp.251-2.

⁸³²W.C. Willoughby to L.M.S., March 2, 1903, (Shoshong) SOAS: B62 F1 30/3.

On the morning of July 9, 1912, chief Tshwene of the Phaleng, who had married Khama's daughter Pidio, came to Lloyd to ask him to publish marriage banns between his brother Bakaa - Batsile and his daughter Goakogile. An account of this incident, as told by Lloyd, is as follows:

'This morning the chief Chwene came, with our native teacher, Peter, to ask one to publish the banner of marriage between his youngest brother, Bakaabatsile, and his - Chwene's, eldest daughter, Gaokohile, ie. a marriage between uncle and niece, and therefore, illegal, in British law.

Of course, such marriages have often taken place amongst Bechwana, and are considered valid. But even then, I believe that such marriages are, comparatively, few and are confined to the families of chiefs, and may be regarded as political marriages, or marriages of convenience. I had to tell Chwene that I could not publish the banns or marry his daughter to her uncle. This upset Chwene very much, and he said that "I had killed him". But I am inclined to think that he was not unprepared for my reply, and tried to bluff me into consent.

I told Chwene that I heard long ago, casually, of this proposed marriage, and that I had preached on the subject for the enlightenment of himself and others: among the subject dealt with was this forbidden marriages. I was careful to specify uncle and niece, as among those who could not legally marry each other.'⁸³³

Lloyd remained uncompromisingly adamant about Tshwene's request because he said it was repugnant to Protectorate law, which he refused to breach. The Phaleng community responded very angrily and took sides in support of their chief, against the missionary. They wrote to Khama charging Mr Lloyd with having no interest in their welfare, apart from collecting money through those alien marriage laws. In his defense, Lloyd objected to this, saying:

'I have never fixed fees for marriages ... the Church fixed the fee at 2/6 for non-members, no charge for members. It may be that the chief does not know that the Government charges 2/6 for every wedding'.⁸³⁴

When Khama finally responded to the Shoshong conflict, he consented to Tshwene's request and asked Mr. Lloyd to marry the Phaleng couple. Lloyd wrote:

'Khama replied to my letter with a very long one, in which he charged your missionaries with caring more for fees than for the welfare of the people, i.e he stated that people told him these things, and he agreed with them....'

When Mr Lloyd insisted that this was an 'illegal wedding', the Shoshong population isolated the missionary, who complained that:

'... the people have studiously ignored your missionary, and have never once said, "How do you do?" or anything else.'

To personally assess the allegations against Lloyd and try to resolve the matter, Khama made a surprise visit to Shoshong, in January 1913. As shown already in chapter five, the investigation turned out to

⁸³³Edwin Lloyd (Shoshong) to L.M.S., July 9, 1912, SOAS: B75 F5.

⁸³⁴Edwin Lloyd to L.M.S., August 7, 1912, (Shoshong), SOAS: B75 F5.

be a disaster for the missionary.⁸³⁵

The fact that Ngwato marriage procedures were undergoing tremendous changes is beyond question. They were gradually moving from being a Ngwato cultural affair in which the missionary had no choice but to co-operate, in performing marriage ordinances, to a position where the missionary and the colonial administrators became allies in conducting them. At first the missionary performed all Church marriages but at this stage some of the procedures were carried out by the District Commissioner's or Magistrate's office. This meant that all 'legal marriages' banns had to be published, in both the magistrate's office and Church and that the Protectorate certificate had to be granted for marriage or divorce. By 1934, there was a complete power shift from the traditional system to the colonial administration and the former was legally obliged to obey the Resident Commissioner's instructions. This drastic change meant that the marriage law was now interpreted in terms of the Protectorate law, thus imposing upon the couple a series of obligations that did not prevail in the Ngwato culture. Therefore, Ngwato Church weddings were not only characterised by new religious rites and the missionary factor, but also moulded by a foreign legal factor. Although the missionaries' rejection of the Ngwato forms of marriages were on the basis of their practices being un-Christian and oppressive to women, these changes did not bring any improvement to the social status of women.

ii). Economic Changes: The Implications of European Trade and Commerce

By the 1890s the BaNgwato were being increasingly absorbed into the values and economic structures of the money economy. In the process, the fabric of Ngwato traditional society was further weakened. The Colonial Administration despite the 1895 London Agreement which supported Indirect Rule and the maintenance of the existing political structures, was increasingly imposing laws and decisions. While this interference weakened the traditional culture, it did not improve the status of women but in various ways further reinforced male dominance.⁸³⁶

The European traders, hunters and explorers had begun to visiting the BaNgwato from the 1880s onwards. By 1857 Shoshong had already become a trading centre, where travellers, hunters, traders and missionaries would break their journey before proceeding to either central or north west Africa. As early as 1859 trading stores, a mission station and a missionary school had been firmly established.⁸³⁷ The impact of the Europeans, on the Ngwato economic life in general and women in particular was immense. They provided people with western manufactured goods and bought their livestock and other

⁸³⁵Ibid.

⁸³⁶Sillery, A., (1952), *The Bechuanaland Protectorate*, pp.51-67.

⁸³⁷See chapter two.

agricultural products.

Westernization eventually resulted in the introduction of wage labour and cash economy, which meant that money increasingly became the medium of exchange. The Labour Migration to European operated and owned firms, mines, factories and plantations in South Africa was facilitated by the Annual Hut Taxes imposed on the BaNgwato by the Colonial Administration in 1899. In addition to the income needed for the payment of Hut Tax, there was an increasing taste for European goods which could only be acquired by cash. The recruitment of these labour migrants at times took the form of compulsion, because their availability was a prerequisite to the survival of the capitalist, exploitative measures of the Southern African mineral and agricultural resources. In order to secure a regular supply of Ngwato manpower, recruiting agencies made yearly visits to Shoshong, then to Palapye and Serowe as the BaNgwato changed their capital. The political position of the BaNgwato, under the Protectorate indirect rule since 1885, also facilitated this process because of the importance of the Hut Tax. The co-operation of the colonial administration and western economic forces had a great impact on Ngwato values and family structure. Primarily affected, was the traditional division of labour. Robert Moffat, for instance, wrote that:

‘The people made rapid advances in civilization; some purchasing wagons, and bringing in their oxen for those labours which formerly devolved on the female sex. The use of clothing became so general, that the want of a merchant was greatly felt, to supply the demands for British commodities... this induced us to invite Mr. D. Hume, in whom we placed implicit confidence, who had already traded much with the natives,... to take up his constant abode on the station for that purpose.’⁸³⁸

The introduction of iron ploughs had compelled men to give assistance to their wives and daughters with agricultural tasks. This however, meant that fields were becoming much larger, which meant more weeding and harvesting burdens for women, especially with more men leaving for migrant employment in South Africa.

While the exploitation of mineral resources held great economic opportunities for the South African capitalistic system, it restricted its recruitment to men.⁸³⁹ To ensure that these men returned to his territory, Khama refused to allow a free movement of wives, mothers and children. Culturally, it was also a taboo for women to approach the mining, manufacturing and smelting fields ‘least they should bewitch the iron’.⁸⁴⁰ All these factors maintained the dependence of women on men. Women also

⁸³⁸Moffat, R., (1842) op cit, p.605.

⁸³⁹Cutrufelli, M. R., (1983), *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression*.

⁸⁴⁰Schapera, I., ed),. *David Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence*, p.35.

continued to provide much of the agricultural labour.

Therefore, while improved means of transport, in the form of the railways; new political and economic systems and the introduction of Christianity had a great impact on the lives of the Ngwato society, they did not immediately change the status of women. The presence of missionaries and European traders led to an increase in such items as clothing, ploughs and other implements, which was seen as a mark of civilization. These factors affected the role of women, who were the major food producers. As a mark of civilization and Christian conversion, the missionaries expected these women to wait until the Sabbath had passed to commence their agricultural operations. James Good, a resident missionary among the BaNgwaketse, who also expected Ngwaketse men to stop their operations on the Sabbath, he wrote:

‘... the unedifying conservation of parties of men sitting in groups preparing and sewing the skins for karosses; or the lively symbols of troops of calves, or some other distraction which tended the service often times anything but unedifying one (sic).’⁸⁴¹

As early as 1846, Livingstone was impressed by Sechele’s enthusiasm in learning to read and write, as well as the speed at which he was acquainting himself with European ways.⁸⁴² Chapman, describing Sechele as "a perfect gentleman" who wore "moleskin trousers, a duffel jacket, a wide-awake hat, and military boots",⁸⁴³ also stressed the same point.

The impact of European ways and values on the BaNgwato, was facilitated by the introduction of the money economy which weakened the communal spirit, which was the life support for the poor, the sick, and the old. The breakdown of such a pattern of living greatly affected old women, who were the largest beneficiaries of the system. Describing the political and social effects of such changes B.C. Thema said that:

‘The hungry came to the chief’s kgotla to be fed, the poor came too, and they might be given mafisa cattle to breed, for the chief, and subsist on the meantime. There were, above everything else, the personal ties which bound the Batswana to their chief, and it is the weakening of these forces that is undermining the former authority of a Tswana chief, much more than the rise of political awareness amongst the people.’⁸⁴⁴

While it is true that this weakened the kingship authority, it is also interesting to observe that in many

⁸⁴¹James Good to L.M.S., April 28, 1875, (Kanye), SOAS: B38 F3 JA.

⁸⁴²Livingstone, D., (1857) op cit, pp.45ff.

⁸⁴³Chapman, J., (1868) op cit, Vol., p.113.

⁸⁴⁴. Thema, B.C., (1972) "The Changing Patterns of Tswana Social and Family Relations", *Botswana Notes and Records*, 4, pp.39-43.

ways, it strengthened that office, as well as the male dominance in general, against the position of women. The King still owned the largest number of cattle, which gave him the power to trade and buy such items as ploughs for his people. This became an additional new source of power. Equally, most people continued to depend on him for the **mafisa** system, whereby a rich man farmed out his cattle to poor families, who kept and subsisted on them. The **mafisa** system had a political factor attached to it because it gained the King more popularity, high status and respect. In this way, a major source of wealth developed, as a form of structural dependence, in which the holder only received a small fraction of the surplus value of the livestock he had created. The fact that the holder could also be called to help the owner with ploughing made the whole system very restrictive.⁸⁴⁵

In general terms, therefore, these developments increased the power of men over women. Through labour migration, for instance, men could purchase European goods, while a woman depended on her husband, brother or father to acquire them. This new factor affected women of all classes, aristocrat and commoners. Class was not a great decisive factor for women, because even under the influence of Christianity and Europeanization, they still remained landless and heavily dependent on men, regardless of their class. However, these economic changes compelled women to find other means of making money, in order to purchase these prestigious European goods. They, for instance, brewed **bojalwa**, traditional beer mainly made of sorghum. Although selling and buying **bojalwa** was prohibited in Ngwatoland, these women secretly and successfully carried out their business,⁸⁴⁶ and thus, through beer sales, money was transferred from men and commercial sectors to women and the rural households in general. This was one of the first indications of a move towards female involvement in public matters.

7.3. Survival Strategies Adopted by Women

The activities of the missionary wives, single woman missionaries and the Ngwato women began to transform the Ngwato and the general missionary view of the role of women. The women, especially the single women missionaries and the Ngwato women, of the last decades of the 19th and early 20th century, did much to soften the anti-female views and attitudes when they penetrated the Ngwato public life, particularly the political and religious spheres. The Ngwato women, inspired by missionary education, which they tried to relate to their own environment as far as possible, began to integrate their new work experience into the traditional life cycle, especially the life of the family. Although the use

⁸⁴⁵Schapera, I., (1940), *Married Life in an African Tribe*, p.77.

⁸⁴⁶Khama to 'Mahoko a Bechuana', April 11, 1890, SOAS: B47 F1 JC: Khama banished a woman from Palaye for a time for brewing and selling **bojalwa**.

of these cultural work roles served as a significant stepping stone towards the development of what was to be their new public roles, it still reinforced dependence on males.

This process among the Ngwato women was started mainly by the first generation of Ngwato school girls. In their innovative responses to Christianity, they found themselves having to break with the tradition, which had for centuries silenced them in the presence of men and in public matters. Although this was followed by a gradual acceptance of women's public roles, household duties and agricultural work still dominated the lives of the majority of the female population.

Missionary education, as we will show in the succeeding pages, neglected indigenous educational methods and approaches, which would have preserved the tradition of female subservience, and therefore became one of the important liberating factors.

7.4. Elizabeth Lees Price: An Example of the Work of Missionary Wives

i). General Background

Mrs E.L. Price is a good example of a prototype wife of a missionary, who made a substantial contribution to missionary work with interesting ideas of her own.

As a daughter of the famous LMS missionary, Robert Moffat of the Kudumane station, Elizabeth had been born (in March 16, 1839) into and lived in a missionary life for most of her years.⁸⁴⁷ In October 1861, she married Roger Price, the sole adult European survivor of the BaKololo tragedy.⁸⁴⁸ Her willingness to marry Roger, who was in co-operation with John MacKenzie and John Moffat her brother, planning to re-establish the BaKololo Mission, demonstrated her commitment to the course of Christianity. With the failure of that mission, Mr Price was eventually appointed to the Ndebele Mission, where he was denied entry by Mzilikazi. He therefore remained at Shoshong for about four years (1862-1866)⁸⁴⁹ and then transferred to the BaKwena of Sechele in 1866 until 1875. Apart from the four years (1875-1879) when the family were in England for their holiday, Elizabeth spent all her missionary life in Southern Africa.

⁸⁴⁷It had not been possible to get the necessary equipment to print it at Cape Town, so proceeded to England. Long, U., ed) (1956) op cit, p.3.

⁸⁴⁸. Mackenzie, J., (1871) op cit, pp.156-248.

⁸⁴⁹Ibid; Roger Price (Logageng) to L.M.S., March 10, 1863, S.O.A.S: B33 F1 JA; R. Moffat (Moffat) to L.M.S., March 10, 1863, S.O.A.S: B35 F1 JA.

ii). Contribution to Missionary History and Work

Elizabeth Price was an intelligent and interesting woman. She wrote interesting letters, and journals which were long and detailed. She would write to her friends by candle light when her children were sleeping, especially to her sister Jane and her older children, after they had gone to Britain.⁸⁵⁰ These journals, from which much of this information is drawn, were compiled and edited by Una Long for publication in a book entitled *The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price written in Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, 1854 - 1883* (1956).

iii). Christianity, Civilization, Education and Medicine

Despite her accuracy in recording events and the vividness of her journals, Elizabeth Price basically wrote from a European point of view, making a contrast between two very different ways of life: her own European and Ngwato experiences. The earliest journals and letters, in particular, seem to have been written with the European audience in mind, stressing the remoteness from civilization of Shoshong. She described the difficulties they were experiencing as they struggled to begin their new married life in that remote environment of Shoshong. Outside their house, for instance, hyenas were prowling every night, while inside snakes were a threat; huge spiders and scorpions, in competition with terrifying reptiles and insects lurked, swam and settled in every corner of the house, which made her life unbearably miserable.⁸⁵¹

Mrs Price also presented herself as a devoted mother, operating within the influence and expectations of her European cultural standards of womanhood. As the wife of a missionary, she tried to paint an excellent picture of a missionary's family, as well as a model of Christian living, in an environment where whites were rare.⁸⁵² For a number of their early years in Shoshong, she and Mrs MacKenzie, another missionary's wife, were the only two white women in the all African community of Shoshong. Another time she was quite alone. She strongly desired that a missionary holding, a special place in a 'tribal' society, had the responsibility to be exemplary in all their dealings with Ngwato families. However this is not what attracted Sekgoma when he invited the missionaries. It was rather their importance in military terms and their use as a shield against his notorious Ndebele and Boer enemies.⁸⁵³ Mrs Price, as daughter of the highly revered and respected missionary Robert Moffat,

⁸⁵⁰ U. Long, (1956), op. cit, p.24.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid. pp.16-24.

⁸⁵² U. Long, (1956), op. cit, p.1.

⁸⁵³ MacKenzie, J., (1871) op cit, p.268: Sekgoma thus refused the passage of missionaries to other African peoples.

represented this factor in the eyes of most BaNgwato. Residence of missionaries was also associated with traders or such items as guns and ammunition.

Mrs Price's immense contribution to the Ngwato mission cannot be over-emphasized. The success of the mission work rested as much with her as it did on Roger Price. Despite her biased conceptions of Ngwato culture, she sometimes wrote about them with great honesty and admiration. But her zeal for the spread of Christianity and 'civilization' did not take into account the fact that Ngwato culture was different from her own.

One of her major contributions was in education. As soon as they settled at Shoshong, in May 1862, she established a school where girls of all ages were taught reading, writing, scripture lessons and domestic science (such as cooking, washing, and household management).⁸⁵⁴ Although this curriculum confined women to the home and its domestic duties, like the Ngwato training had done, it, in the final analysis, created a new image for the women. In this role of an educator, the Ngwato's image of Mrs Price stretched beyond the cultural confines of what was regarded to be a feminine role. The notion of teacher to the Ngwato conjured a **ngaka**, rain-maker (**moroka-wa-pula**), religious-priest (herbalist) etc. In this category, therefore, she was seen as more than just a preacher and an educator. She was stepping far beyond the cultural definition of the role of women. This was a new thing, which was not deliberately planned for by the missionaries themselves. It created confidence in the Ngwato women, who now eagerly desired to acquire the same skills. This was therefore a contradiction, because Mrs Price herself proudly saw the aim of education as a symbol of Christian civilization and European cultural superiority, to which the BaNgwato had to be incorporated. The school was seen as the machinery which prepared a way for Christianity. The response of the BaNgwato to education and 'civilization' therefore subsequently determined whether they were good or bad. When Sechele, for instance, disagreed with the missionaries on such matters, he was described as of an 'odious character', while Sekgoma who adamantly refused to accept the foreignness of Christianity was described as a 'wicked treacherous old King'. Sekgoma's 'selfishness' was seen as representing 'heathenism'. Of Sekgoma, Mrs Price wrote saying he:

'... would hang about determined to get at least a cup of coffee or something of the kind - and Khamane (sic) was a little like him in it. It was very disagreeable to have to treat Sekhomi (sic) with some degree of courtesy and attention, knowing that he cd (sic) torment and worry us in small ways if we did not, and he was such a despicable and dirty old creature - and his one eye made him look worse, although' he cd not help that.'⁸⁵⁵

In contrast to Sekgoma, Khama and Kgamane, who had responded favourably to both Mrs Price's

⁸⁵⁴Ibid, pp.9-10.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid, p.77.

lessons and Christianity, were seen as models of African Christianity:

'Their reverence and respect for this offensive old gentleman is striking and whenever they feel it right to obey, they do so with promptitude - but on the other hand, they unwaveringly resist him and reject his authority whenever it interferes with their duty as Christians.'

I was very much struck and delighted with an intense of this the other day. We were just engaging in family prayers - Khamane happening to be with us - when the old chief presented himself at the door of our hut. He looked in one evil temper scowled upon his son - then, seeing we took no notice beyond motioning him to a seat, he burst the door open and answered. "I shall stand!" - & there he stood in the doorway, screening nearly every ray of light from Roger as he read - his own dirty heathen naked self, & with a countenance perfectly satanic. His son sat clothed like a Christian and a gentleman, & when the reading was over he knelt reverently and boldly before His God & in the presence of his heathen father. When we arose and commenced coffee drinking, Khamane stepped forward eagerly & handed his father's cup back and forwards with a reverence and awe wh. contrasted strongly with the perfect indifference with which he had only a few moments before regarded him. I felt a thrill of delight and admiration run thro' me at the right.⁸⁵⁶

Sekgoma received this negative assessment because his unfavourable response was not only seen as an obstacle to missionary work but also a hinderance to European traders such as Captain Glyn.⁸⁵⁷ These activities were seen as promoting the missionary course in Africa. For instance, whenever Sechele adopted such practices and measures which promoted literary education and other forms of European culture he was described as 'a fine man at heart and a beloved of his people.'⁸⁵⁸ In the same tone Mrs Price wrote of Sechele's compound saying:

'I was amazed at the extreme cleanliness of everything around me - the floor almost polished, so finely smeared, and at each entrance to the house was a small square of pebbles inland, which gave a very tasty appearance (and suggested a plan for my house when I get it - my real house I mean) there was one camp table covered with a prepared buck - skin for ornament. A few European and native chairs stand by and a wee brass which were the two cups and saucers just used by the king and queen.'⁸⁵⁹

The acquisition of two European comfortable chairs, a pillow, a toilet, Sechele's wife's pair of shoes and stockings and other European clothing such as the crinoline, 'who has reached this part of the world',⁸⁶⁰ were seen as a mark of 'civilization'. Mrs Price, however, complained of the strange usage of these European materials. Sechele, for instance, is said to have usually dressed 'in the hottest

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid, p.143-4.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid, p.145.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid, p.19.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid, p.111.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

garments which could be found' when 'the day was by no means cold.'⁸⁶¹ The main problems occurred whenever Sechele mixed his own Kwenā customs with Christianity. He then suddenly turned into an 'uncivilized heathen'. Mrs Price wrote:

'I cannot understand the mixture in Sechele. He reads the Bible thread-bare - so as some of the holiest Christians do not read it - yet he is one of the vilest of characters in reality and (there is) no more of vital Christianity in him than in Sekhomi (sic) - the naked savage King of the Bamanguato, who knows little more of the white people and their habits etc than of their guns, ammunition and brandy. Ma - Sechele is Christian-like-weak and lowly and innocent, but she is under (a) horrid influence.'⁸⁶²

What baffled Mrs Price most, was Sechele's mode of praying. Influenced by his Tswana conception of prayer, which saw the secular and the religious as inseparable, Sechele believed that prayer would affect every aspect of life. For instance, Mrs Price says that:

'Next morning Roger went again and found the family at morning prayer. I will give you an idea of Sechele mode of praying. he rattles on in prayer as if chatting to some comrade (....?) things or anything which comes first, more as if in self - exaltation that civilization had reached him and his people that he himself had been so highly blessed - that he read etc etc - and that moreover he had been helped with abundance of everything - "with a thousand cattle - with a hundred sheep and perhaps ten or so - goats" and more than this he said wh. (sic) cannot and hardly care to remember - so vile, so mocking it seemed - and so utterly ludicrous to those who know him to be so utterly devoid of sincerity and true religion. Sechele is in reality poorer in cattle than any great chief in Africa, because he has parted with an immense number for the sake of European goods and valuables wh. he has in abundance - mostly guns, ammunition and apparel - also horses and wagons.'⁸⁶³

The European conceptions of the incapability of women also affected Mrs Price's own interpretation. As a young wife and mother, she had grave misgivings about herself as a missionary wife. In her earliest years she struggled with this imposed inferiority complex of women so much that she grew to be 'always timid', 'always apprehensive', 'always inclined to introspection', and 'always afraid of failure'.⁸⁶⁴ Despite this, Mrs Price had remarkable stamina, which empowered her to withstand the challenge of mission and family life. Her successes in building her own positive image of womanhood in terms of European expectations, meant that she still viewed Tswana culture as inferior. Her nursemaids had to be thoroughly drilled and introduced to European ways of house-keeping: sweeping, washing, cooking etc. She also described Tswana women as extremely rude, always noisy and 'jabbering at the tops of their voices'. Ope and Bantshang, two of King Sechele's daughters, who frequently visited her on a friendly basis, as well as Gobitsamang, her student and a later wife to Khama, fell into this same category. Although these women were highly reputed among their own

⁸⁶¹ Ibid, p.111.

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ Ibid, p.112.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid, p.2.

people, Mrs Price frequently complained of how their primitive environment had badly influenced their thoughts and character. Despite their warm and heartfelt regards for Mrs Price, their friendship was far from mutual companionship, and because of her response they remained strangers to one another at heart. This was possibly due to the fact that Mrs Price had serious misgivings about their Christian genuineness. She wrote saying:

‘What is all this? Is it from an idea of some great temporal benefit connected with the (spelling) sheets? or because it is all the fashion at court or how many are there truly hungering and thirsting for these living waters?’⁸⁶⁵

In spite of this, Mrs Price made important observations about the cultural conditions of these Tswana women saying:

‘The women here are perfect slaves to their husbands and in ploughing or ‘picking’ - time - have to work and (for) their bread with the sweat of their brow while their husbands recline lazily at home in the shade making karosses or sleeping.’⁸⁶⁶

Although Mrs Price’s educational curriculum unconsciously confined women to household duties, she challenged men to help their wives with agricultural work - such as ploughing, cultivation and harvesting. She however failed to address the role which women could have played in political matters and failed to suggest ways they could contribute in public affairs or towards the **Kgotla** decision - making processes. A more critical analysis of the socio - political position of women whom, she seen as an oppressed group, would have made an immense contribution to the history of the Ngwato women.

Another area of Ngwato life which Mrs Price saw as oppressive to the women was the **bojale** school. She was particularly opposed to the ritual part of the ceremony because some of her school girls came back to her classes with terrible cuts on their bodies. She complained that they came back with ‘their backs brutally thrashed and scarred ... the girls are ... thrashed, to be made women.’⁸⁶⁷ Describing these **bojale** processions and ceremonies, which earmarked the beginning of womanhood, as disgusting, indignant and horrifying she tried to prevent her students and maids from attending them.⁸⁶⁸ She also rejected this practice because, in her opinion, it had a bad influence on these girls, which hindered Christian progress and ‘civilization’. However, there were similarities between the **bojale** educational programmes and Mrs Price’s own domestic science classes. They both basically trained and equipped for womanhood. Consciously or unconsciously, the missionary education provided by Mrs Price, also became a process through which women were confined to that cultural mould of familial duties. This

⁸⁶⁵Ibid, p.24.

⁸⁶⁶Ibid, p.146.

⁸⁶⁷Long, U., (1956) op cit, p130.

⁸⁶⁸Ibid, pp.137-8.

kept women from participating in political activities or from officiating in religious activities, which were seen as sources of male superiority, power and high social status. Mrs Price's curriculum saw literacy as a priority because, while she wanted to produce skilled house - keepers in domestic science (cooking, washing and household management), it was essential that they read the Word of God for themselves. It must also be noted that while Mrs Price's educational efforts were generally conceived in the light of European context; and also reinforced the Ngwato cultural conception of the position of women, it nonetheless contributed essential skills, which began to create a new image for these women.

Mrs Price's other major contribution was in the realm of medical practice. In an attempt to meet the needs of the sick, she advocated for the development of a medical missionary organisation.⁸⁶⁹ To provide for immediate needs, the Prices turned their spare wagon into sick quarters, since there was no building for that purpose. Mrs Price argued that medical services provided great evangelistic opportunities to the general populace. Like her, Livingstone and MacKenzie had earlier taken to administering European medicine to their patients. Livingstone himself had made efforts to co-operate with indigenous *dingaka* in discovering certain remedies. While most of these LMS missionaries saw European medical practice to be a handmaid of Christianity, this combination also reinforced people's beliefs and values. Mrs Price wrote:

'Such little attentions from the womankind of our party, and the skill of English surgery as exhibited in such a beneficial way by your father upon them is not unlikely to make a good impression upon their heathen minds ... and thus at last can be the means of their conversions.'⁸⁷⁰

Like education, the European medical practice was expected 'to make a good impression upon their heathen minds'. The BaNgwato however, did not have any difficulties in relating the benefits of medical practice to religion. In their world view, neither religion nor medical practice could stand alone or be isolated from each other. What the people were objecting to was the tendency of the missionaries to see Christianity and European culture as a single package, from which they had no choice to pick and choose its contents. Despite this rejection, their religiosity taught them that medical dynamism, meaning and power resulted from the Divine.

In spite of her preconceived interpretations of the responses of the Tswana to Christianity and their day - to - day experiences, Mrs Price's views were, at times, very radical and stretched beyond the confinement of European cultural expectations and views about women. Her parents, for instance, often

⁸⁶⁹ This dream was only fulfilled 80 years later when the Scottish - Livingstone Hospital was started by the United Free Church of Scotland. It took over L.M.S. work in Molepolole in 1931.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid, p.19.

disapproved of her unorthodox views. In her introductory remarks to Mrs Price's journals, Una Long described how her independent views were regarded as 'heretical' by the Anglican parsons in Cape Town.

Mrs Price's analysis of the position of Ngwato women, genuine as it was, also argued for the superiority of western culture. In making a comparison between the status of Ngwato women and western women, Mrs Price failed to realise that the two were living in different cultural environments. The major concern here is not a mere confrontation between diverse cultural values, but the social position of women and their work. To address the familial and social role of these women, one has to explore the exploitative conditions of her work, at a given time and in a specific culture.

7.5. Lady Missionaries: Their Contributions and Difficulties

In the 1890s, the LMS Directors were coming to the realization that women were making a substantial contribution and that they could be a great asset to the missionary work. This realization was followed by an increase in female missionaries joining the LMS as educationists, evangelists and musicians, etc. In the LMS Founders' Week convention, of September 1895, Mrs Hewlett, for instance, called upon women and girls to consider joining missionary work. She pleaded saying:

'My dear friends, - I am always glad of the opportunity of pleading for the dear women and girls I should like specially to speak to the mothers and girls here. Cannot you spare a daughter for the mission field? Workers are needed. Is the sacrifice too great for you to make? ... Or if any of your hearts, dear young sisters, have been touched, do ask the Lord to receive you as His workers in the foreign mission field.'⁸⁷¹

Other speakers, on the same subject, were Miss Miller and Miss Horne, who were themselves already missionaries in Amoy and spoke saying:

'Will not the women of England pray that God will raise up such helpers in the native Church? And are there not some who, hearing this cry of need from the oppressed women of China's heathen homes, will ask: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Here am I, send me.'⁸⁷²

This call led to some of the women committing themselves to what Lewis termed 'the salvation of her sex'⁸⁷³ and subsequently being appointed to the Ngwato mission at the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1893 and 1899 alone, three single women missionaries had been appointed to Palapye and Serowe. Their activities and contribution to the male dominated Ngwato Church and society are an

⁸⁷¹ 'Centenary of the London Missionary Society', *Founders' Week Convention Report*, London, Sept. 1895, p.98.

⁸⁷² Ibid, p.94.

⁸⁷³ R.H. Lewis to L.M.S (Molepolole) July 27, 1912, SOAS: B74 F5.

interesting story.

Miss Alice Young and Ellen Louisa Hargreaves were both appointed to Palapye in 1893, as W.C. Willoughby's colleagues and left England in December 2, 1893. In their company had been Miss Edith Ellis, who announced her decision to return to England before reaching her destination, due to a gradually deteriorating mental balance, resulting from the difference in physical conditions in Africa. A few weeks after their arrival in Africa, she wrote in despair saying:

'I am assured that I have made a mistake blindly and faced difficulty after difficulty of God's and not of Satan's placing there. I must return home, get a school and quickly work for Christ in a humble sphere.'⁸⁷⁴

In contrast to this, Hargreaves wrote the Directors an encouraging letter, saying:

'Miss Young and I are looking forward with increasing joy to our work at Palapye. God has indeed granted to us his own peace so far....'⁸⁷⁵

The Misses Young and Hargreaves arrived at Palapye on February 10, 1894 and immediately devoted their time to the study of language and Ngwato ways of life. The former had been appointed as an educational worker, to promote reading and writing, which the missionaries saw as the hand-maid of Christianity, while the latter was appointed to do evangelistic work amongst women.⁸⁷⁶ In one of her first letters from Palapye, Hargreaves wrote saying:

'We see Khama sometimes, he is very kind and we feel quite at home with him notwithstanding our inability to carry on a conversation in Sechuana. I admire him very much indeed, his willing co-operation in all the work of the mission is I think wonderful. When one thinks how persistently he has been troubled by our government.'⁸⁷⁷

Miss Young expressed the same immediate satisfaction and pleasure at her position and prospects. She immediately began to make arrangements for the educational work, as well as the training of teachers. Within four months of their arrival she reported their progress, saying:

'Miss Hargreaves and I like this place and the people very much. For so many years I had longed to work among the heathen and now that my desire is granted to me I think there cannot be a happier person anywhere. there is a joy which I cannot describe, and which makes me feel that God has indeed blessed me in permitting me to work for him here ... A week or two after we arrived some of the natives came to ask me if I would teach their children English. I told them I should be glad to do so

⁸⁷⁴Edith Ellis to L.M.S., January 13, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JA.

⁸⁷⁵W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 16, 1894; Hargreaves (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 18, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JB.

⁸⁷⁶ *Missionary Register of the L.M.S.*, No.995 &996 .

⁸⁷⁷Hargreaves (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 18, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JB.

when I knew a little more Sechuana. Oh they said "if you teach them now you will have to speak to children English and that will be the best way for them to learn." The next week I started with six children hoping we might learn from each other. The time to meet is 9 O'clock but they are always here one or two hours before time. I am very pleased with them, they are so anxious to learn. They read Royal Reader N.1 but their pronunciation of English words is so funny. They try to teach me the words in Sechuana, and I find it very useful to me'

She went on to tell the Directors that:

'It does one good to hear them sing, for their whole heart is in it, but although they sing the same tunes as those we sing at home it is often very difficult to recognise them.'⁸⁷⁸

The following day she again wrote saying that:

'I often wish that many Christian friends at home could see and hear these people, especially on the Sunday morning. It is a grand sight to see so many winding their way to the Church carrying their bag of books in one hand and their stools in the other.

When I hear them singing their hymns so heartily and looking so bright and happy it thrills me, and I feel that I shall not like to change places with anyone in the wide world ... Khama has been very kind to us, he is a noble Christian, and we thank God for such a chief.'⁸⁷⁹

Miss Young recognised that Ngwato 'Christianity' was different from what she was used to in England. Their singing was not only full of vitality but expressed within the context of their own culture. Although the people used the same language in their singing, their Christian life had possessed its words, renewed them and given them new meaning and direction.

In what sounded like an expression of female incapability, Miss Young told the Directors that, when they arrived Khama had complained saying: 'why did not the Directors send them a man who knows Sechwana and who knows something about the country and people'.⁸⁸⁰ Despite this initial disappointment that the Directors had sent a female rather than a male teacher, Khama was very happy and supportive to the women missionaries. He at once promised to build brick school houses for Young and Hargreave to use for their classes. These were the first school buildings to be built in Palapye. Before this there was only one private school, kept by Simon Ratshosa, Sekgoma's close friend. It had met at the **Kgotla** due to the lack of a proper school building.⁸⁸¹ In November 19 1894, this splendid school building, with five rooms consisting of a central hall and four class rooms, accommodating about 300 scholars, was opened by Khama. With the help of five Ngwato male and two female teachers,

⁸⁷⁸A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 6, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JC.

⁸⁷⁹Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JC.

⁸⁸⁰A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 6, 1893, SOAS: B50 F1 JE.

⁸⁸¹Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JC.

Young began to teach sewing, kindergarten, reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture, needlework, geography, drawing, domestic economy, singing and musical drill. Parents however repeatedly requested that their children be taught English. By 1896 Miss Young was reporting of the satisfying progress of the school saying:

'I find children very quick to learn except in arithmetic. The girls' needlework is especially good. I am very pleased with their work and have sent specimens of it home. They have made many dresses and useful other garments, some of the big girls can cut out nicely too. Fifty of the girls have learned to knit and have made cuffs, bodies, shoes etc. the infants are taught their needlework by drill. Semane a very nice girl of 16 years of age has taught almost all the needlework, and most useful girl, I only hope I shall be able to keep her for a long time yet. the singing lessons and drill are a great treat for them. Their happy faces show how much they enjoy these lessons.... The domestic economy is taught at present only through a few object lessons on household necessities and a little practical work for the senior girls viz. washing & ironing. I shall be glad when I can go very further than that.'⁸⁸²

Unfortunately, Miss E.L. Hargreave's stay in Palapye was characterised by disappointment upon disappointment and failure and hopelessness. This was because she had failed to take advantage of learning from the experiences of Ngwato women, who would have given her valuable advice or initiated her into the cultural matters of the society. This missionary had come into the Ngwato field with pre-conceived ideas that African women were too ignorant to teach her something valuable. This attitude created many serious problems for her and she also did not get on very well with her colleague Miss Young.⁸⁸³ This same, negative attitude and thinking about women, in LMS fields, was expressed by Miss Bliss, when she addressed the Centenary of the LMS in 1895, in the need for female missionaries to join missionary work. She told the attendants:

'It is a sad fact that large numbers, even of our Church members, are lamentably ignorant and indifferent about this important matter, and they need instruction as much on their children as in more directly religious education.'⁸⁸⁴

Having been appointed to take charge of the women's work, Miss Hargreave found the language an obstacle to her progress. She tried harder by taking lessons every morning from a Setswana scholar, John Moffat himself, who was born among the Tswana. When Moffat, who was the senior colonial administrator in Bechuanaland, based at Palapye, left for the Cape, Willoughby took his place as her tutor. She wrote of him saying:

'He ... helps me all he can with this as with everything ... he has got on wonderfully

⁸⁸²Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 21, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1 JC.

⁸⁸³A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 28, 1895, SOAS: B53 F2 JA.

⁸⁸⁴'Centenary of the London Missionary Society', *Proceedings of the Founders' Week Convention*, 21st to 27th Sept., 1895, p.88.

well with the language... A good many of the Christian natives have visited us here, but many more men come than women. The women do so much of the hard work still, and seem so much backward than the men that I can hardly see yet how I am to get hold of them. I am longing to know more of them and to be able to speak freely to them. I have got to know a few of the Christian women - two or three of them will I am sure be helpful to me, and gradually I shall come to know more of them.⁸⁸⁵

But she still found the language difficult and did not make much progress whatsoever. This failure widened the gulf between the Ngwato women and herself, whilst she made very little effort to bridge it.⁸⁸⁶

One afternoon Miss Hargreave was on a horse ride with her colleague and one of the local traders, Mr Loosely, when she was heavily thrown from her mount. Unconscious and with blood pouring from her head, she received immediate medication and returned to England when she had sufficiently recovered, on medical advice and on sick leave for a year.⁸⁸⁷ She returned to Palapye in 1896 greatly distressed by her father's death. Hargreaves now did nothing more than complain incessantly that women were of 'low intellect', 'lacking ambition' and that they were no responsible helpers.⁸⁸⁸ Rinderpest, the war, the language which she could still not master and a dozen other things, all conspired to undermine her purpose. In March 1899, Howard Williams described Miss Hargreave as utterly unfit for the work at Palapye. He suspected her of undergoing depression and mental disturbances. This was worsened by the fact that the two European lady missionaries had lived with the BaNgwato, rather than living among white people in the town.⁸⁸⁹ As her physical and emotional condition weakened, she increasingly found work among Ngwato women unsatisfactory. She consistently complained of lacking responsible, female helpers and that whenever she called meetings for sewing classes, only a few women came. Realities of life in a foreign culture soon challenged her endeavours. She wrote to the Directors saying:

'My failure has been largely owing to the circumstances of the people - the unsettled condition of the tribe during the last two or three years. But to be quite frank, I am afraid I must say that I see no prospect of work opening out among the married women of the tribe to any extent for some time to come. I came back to Phalapye in August '97 full of hope, as you know, concerning the work that it seemed to me might be done, but, so far as I have been able to get at the women, I have found them, in consequences of the hard conditions of their lives, and, as a result, of their

⁸⁸⁵E.L. Hargreaves (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 20, 1894, SOAS: B51 F2 JA.

⁸⁸⁶Howard Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 18, 1899, SOAS: B56 F1 JA; E.L. Hargreaves (Palapye) to L.M.S., August 20, 1894, SOAS: B56 FC.

⁸⁸⁷W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., November 13, 1897, B54 F2 FC.

⁸⁸⁸Hargreave (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 8, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JC; November 13, 1897, B54 F2 JC; Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 28, 1899, SOAS: B53 F2 JA.

⁸⁸⁹H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 18, 1899, SOAS: B56 F1 JA.

exceedingly low intellectual level, utterly without ambition with regard to any department of work new to them. Last July and August I tried, as I told you, to help some of the women to make their clothing, but although they are glad enough to have their dresses made for them, they do not care to learn how to make them. The same applies to learning to read etc. My own leaning has always been towards evangelistic work, but hitherto there has been no opening for this form of work. Of course during the last few months the people have been away at their lands, and all mission work, except the Sunday services, for which those whose gardens are not at a great distance from the town come in, has been at a standstill.⁸⁹⁰

This condition increased Miss Hargreave's frustration and hopelessness. When the response of women continued to be poor, she resorted to trying to impose her own European ideas and customs and rejecting everything Ngwato. In spite of the effects of western civilization and commerce, which were seriously transforming their expectations, these women still preferred the Ngwato culture and customs. They therefore rejected Hargreave's attempts and undermined her purposes. In London Thompson's patience was being stretched to the limit and finally ran out. He wrote to Brown, the B.D.C. secretary saying that:

'... as Miss Hargreaves has not been able to enter upon constant and systematic mission work, and was still unable to take her final examinations in the language, and so as not to cast a slur upon her character, that she be asked to resign.'⁸⁹¹

She finally resigned her connection with the society in 1899 and went back to England. She had failed to develop her women's department of the Palapye mission. This once again left the efforts to bring the women's role to the centre of public activity out of the missionary agenda.⁸⁹²

Miss Hargreave's problems, as a missionary among women, largely resulted from her failure to realise that there was a need for a cultural contextualized approach. Challenges of this environment, where women were culturally prejudiced against because of their sex, called for the missionary to learn to overcome his or her misunderstandings and ethnocentric feelings. Language was one of the contributing factors which led to Hargreave's failure in her work among women, unlike Miss Young who had mastered the Setswana language, customs and traditions which led to more effective means of communicating Christianity to the Ngwato women. Having failed to translate the Christian message, or other practical lessons, so that they were understood in the local language and culture, she tried to compel these Ngwato women to bring up their families according to European styled living. To her, being a Christian entailed not only attending missionary instructions but also adoption of European customs and the rejection of Ngwato ones. As we have seen, this was not always possible. While these

⁸⁹⁰Hargreave (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 13, 1899, SOAS: B56 F1 JC.

⁸⁹¹R.W. Thompson (London) to J.T. Brown (Secretary of B.D.C), April 29, 1899, SOAS: B28 F4.

⁸⁹²Hargreave (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 15, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JB; also May 27, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JA.

women wanted to share in European material benefits and ways, especially education, they could not be drawn into accepting a western type of Christianity, which completely rejected everything of their past culture and heritage.⁸⁹³

However, men had continued to allow their wives and daughters to attend Christian instructions, as long as this did not take them away from their normal household responsibilities. Anything contrary to this had led to conflicts with these men and created a difficulty for women, especially young wives. The mother-in-laws, who had absolute authority, were mostly extremely conservative regarding what they saw as their daughter-in-law's roles. It was impossible for the latter to make independent decisions on religious matters without having to consult their husband or mother-in-law. This is why Khama's mother was a secret disciple of Christianity.⁸⁹⁴

Despite the problems, which were faced by the lady missionaries, especially those working directly with women, it is evident that their ministry presented great and practically unlimited opportunities. It was a chance for imparting the benefits of literary education and Christianity to these women, through formal instructions and informal discussions in their own homes. This task called for patience and persistence. It was therefore an oversight on the part of Hargreave that, when she did not see great and immediate visible results, she gave up the work and eventually went back to England.

Miss Young, who was the first educational woman missionary and an elementary school teacher, with experience of work in a British boarding school in Leicester, did very well. Success with Setswana language and willingness to learn people's way of life opened up great opportunities for her.⁸⁹⁵ To start with, she gathered a small group of children round herself, through whom she increased her knowledge of the language. As she taught them English they also taught her a few Setswana words, especially through singing, which was one of her major mediums of instruction.⁸⁹⁶ Within three months, there were about 190 children in attendance and more were still coming. She also had seven Ngwato teachers, two of whom were girls under in-service training and assisting her with teaching.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹³Hargreave (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 13, 1899, SOAS: B56 F1 JC.

⁸⁹⁴. See chapters two and six; Also see J. MacKenzie, (1871), *op cit*, pp.410-22.

⁸⁹⁵A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B51 F1 JC.

⁸⁹⁶ W.C. Willoughby, (1923), *Race Problems in the Native Africa*, pp.42-3.

⁸⁹⁷A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., April 23, 1896, SOAS: B53 F1; Reports, 1895-1897, 'First Report from Palapye', W.C. Willoughby, March 20, 1895, SOAS: B2 F4.

Semane, one of the girls, lived with Miss Young in the same quarters.⁸⁹⁸ Her reliance on indigenous women, whom she worked with as partners, won her the confidence and support of the general population, who gladly allowed their children to be instructed by her. Through these women, this European female missionary learnt what it meant to be a real mother to the children. Through this method Miss Hargreave might also have won the hearts of mothers and understood, with sympathy, their efforts and cultural difficulties.

Miss Young was also aware of the fact that education and Christianity had to be sensitive to the social and economic needs of the people. She wrote saying:

‘Parents are continually coming to tell me that they must send their children away because they have no food The children who attend best are those in the English class, coming from homes where poverty is not so great.’⁸⁹⁹

Patience and perseverance in the training of women was called for, because this was the only means through which they could reach the majority of women in the town. Home visitation, which was a powerful means of reaching the majority of the female population, needed a good number of trained indigenous women, not only one European to do it. This would have been a very useful method of spreading the influence of Christianity to the untouched outskirts of the town and neighbouring villages and regions, rather than simply concentrating the work in the place where the missionary resided. At the Molepolole mission, for instance, Miss Mary Partridge, assisted by Mrs Williams, the wife of that station’s resident missionary, in 1898, had begun using the BaKwena women to reach out to the outskirts of the town with great results. She, wrote that:

‘In one village a woman is teaching a few other women, and I am very much hoping that this form of work will extend. Three days a week now I go to various parts of the town to try to help the women to cut out and make their dresses. This gives me a very welcome opportunity of becoming better acquainted with some of the women.’⁹⁰⁰

In a predominantly preliterate community, such as the Ngwato one, the use of tracts and magazines would have proved very ineffective, and the method advocated above was the most practical one. Again, the fact that it was practically impossible to always get the women away from their household responsibilities, made the idea of home meetings and classes the best means of reaching out to these people. This idea and approach should also have led to the work being finally left in the hands of Ngwato women. This whole idea should have been the starting point, whereby the indigenous Church moved towards a self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting stage, which was a theoretical

⁸⁹⁸ J.H.L. Burns, (1962), *Hundred Years of Christianity among the Bamangwato*, p.11.

⁸⁹⁹E. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., December 23, 1897, SOAS: B54 F2 JC.

⁹⁰⁰M. Partridge (Molepolole) to L.M.S., September 17, 1898, SOAS: B55 f2 JB.

principle of the LMS.⁹⁰¹ However, it has to be mentioned that since the Ngwato huts or compounds were generally open to passers - by, who occasionally came in and out, the meetings were consistently distracted. The *Founder's Week Convention Report of 1895*, for instance, cites Edwin Lloyd as having complained that:

'Privacy is difficult to obtain in native homes, which are far from satisfactory, and too often encourage what is evil and discourage what is good'.⁹⁰²

Children frequently came round and took the best places in their mothers laps or began to cry in the middle of the session. Again, in accordance with Tswana custom whenever husbands or any other guest came, the woman was expected to demonstrate some amount of courtesy, by offering maximum attention. This delayed the rest of the class and further discouraged Miss Hargreave in particular.

In April 1899, Alice Young resigned her connection with the Society, because of the policy of the Directors that women missionaries were not to get married during their period of missionary service, although male missionaries had no such restrictions. Her loss, due to her marriage to a British trader named Mr P.A. Johnston, a local Palapye resident, was considerable, especially after her immense contribution on behalf of women and children. Miss Young was, in fact, torn between marriage and her mission work. She had to break and reconcile with Mr Johnston over and over again. This inner conflict is evident in some of her correspondence. In one of her letters she, for instance, wrote saying:

'The time I have spent here working amongst these children has been a very happy one to me, but the last 18 months especially have been very trying ones'.⁹⁰³

Although Young's departure led to a decline in Day and Sunday school attendances in the capital and its outstations,⁹⁰⁴ she continued to contribute to the development of education, as a private and voluntary educator in both Serowe and Shoshong. When she later moved to Mabeleapudi with her husband she opened a school for the village children and did fantastic voluntary work there. In Palapye she had organised an evening school for the boys working as servants in the houses and stores of Europeans and raised two teachers from them.⁹⁰⁵

Fortunately, Miss Alice Young's replacement, Miss Ella Sharp, a certificated teacher, was equally

⁹⁰¹ See chapter 4.

⁹⁰² *Proceedings of the Founders' Week Convention Report*, Sept. 1895, p.168.

⁹⁰³ Young (Palapye) L.M.S., May 7, 1894, SOAS: B55 F1 JC.

⁹⁰⁴ *L.M.S. Africa South Reports*, Palapye, 1899 by H. Williams, SOAS: B3 F1; Ibid, March 18, 1899, SOAS: B56 F1 JA.

⁹⁰⁵ Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 3, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2 JA.

valuable.⁹⁰⁶ Pending her arrival, Miss Mary Partridge of the Molepolole mission, came to Palapye to give temporary assistance during Willoughby's long leave of absence in England.⁹⁰⁷ Sharp finally arrived and took charge of the educational work at Palapye in 1899, and settled in 1902 with the Ngwato people at their new capital of Serowe. She became the longest serving woman missionary of the Society in Africa.⁹⁰⁸ As an educationist she was responsible not only for the Sunday School work, but also conducted Bible classes and industrial training for both boys and girls. For the Ngwato influential men, this was unacceptable because the task of training boys was traditionally performed by men. These conservative men found it unacceptable to have their boys taught by a woman.⁹⁰⁹ This is an indication of the many peculiar difficulties which these women faced and which, in several ways, made it hard for them to achieve success in the mission. The secretary of the B.D.C., Mr Wookey, having interviewed Peter Gaon(g)ale, in 1904, a Ngwato evangelist, in fact, summarised these difficulties as follows:

'The Bechuana have a very low opinion of womanhood, and they look upon it as being scarcely fitting that a woman should occupy any position of authority or equality. It is surely unnecessary to say that no member of this mission has the smallest sympathy with such an opinion. Many ways and ideals we often find it hard to respect. We would therefore venture to point out that except for the teaching of girls there is no scope in this mission for lady teachers. And even in such cases it is impossible to show parents that the missionary at the station is not in control of the lady's work.'⁹¹⁰

Therefore, the issue of female leadership became one of the reasons for hostility between the BaNgwato and the LMS. Their objection to the idea of a female missionary taking charge of the educational policies and programmes of the town, left the B.D.C. with no choice but to conform to their demands and they recommended that a married school master be sent to take charge of educational work in Serowe. This demand and bias was influenced by the Ngwato culture which promoted male dominance. Jennings, the resident missionary, strongly supported the Ngwato male views which demanded a male teacher in place of Miss Sharp.⁹¹¹ These Ngwato men wanted Miss Sharp only to take charge of the girls school and give them useful female education as it were in the past. In 1912 this matter had become so serious and urgent that the B.D.C. was compelled to recommend that the appointment of a

⁹⁰⁶A. Young (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 1897, SOAS: B54 F2.

⁹⁰⁷ Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October 4, 1900, SOAS: b58 F3.

⁹⁰⁸ Goodall, (1954), *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945*, pp.260-1.

⁹⁰⁹E. Sharp to L.M.S. September 8, 1904, (Serowe) SOAS: B65 F JE.

⁹¹⁰B.D.C. Committee Meeting, held in Serowe, October 15-17, 1904, SOAS: B64.

⁹¹¹W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 3, 1902, SOAS: B60; B.D.C. Minutes of a Meeting held at Serowe, October 15-27, 1904, SOAS: B64.

married male school master had to be made immediately. In making their recommendation, however, the committee pointed out that:

‘It is only just to Miss Sharp that we put on record that she is in no way answerable for the present difficult position in relation to educational matters, The Bamangwato repeatedly said “We have no fault to find with Miss Sharp.”’

The BaNgwato agreed that Ella Sharp was committed and diligent in her work, but stressed that they needed a male teacher.⁹¹² Formerly, in 1904 the **Kgotla** meeting, at Serowe, had told Williams that someday they were going to have their own male teacher to head their educational programmes. As such, the struggle to promote the status of women was a difficult one. The 1906 Sargent Report on education reveals that there was, for instance, a huge difference between the male and female salaries. For example, while Thebe a male teacher received £30 per year, Koolebale, a female teacher, who taught girls knitting and singing got only £18.⁹¹³ Most of the male missionaries were in support of this bias against the female Ngwato workers and missionaries. Miss Sharp wrote challenging this bias saying:

‘I cannot see that our Society should withdraw from its position of showing these people that women can occupy positions of authority or equality, for I think it is a point they require educating upon, and I am not at all sure that one or two of our committee friends do not take the same view as the Bechuana.’⁹¹⁴

It was under these great drawbacks and disadvantageous situations, which were a hindrance to educational progress, that these women missionaries had to work. It was also demanded that they should conform to male superiority at family and official level, and this angered Miss Ella Sharp. She, therefore, decided to fight these difficulties with greater determination, arguing that the Society needed to withdraw from ‘its present attitude as to women holding positions of authority’.⁹¹⁵ Although the BaNgwato eventually turned down this offer, the female members of the Committee took offence at the B.D.C.’s decision, as well as to the Ngwato anti-feminism.⁹¹⁶ In a S.A.D.C. Annual Meeting of 1913, in a discussion led by Howard Williams and Lewis, under the subjects ‘Women’s work among women in our mission’, and ‘The claim of the women’, respectively, resulted in one the most fierce debates of the meeting, in which European women played a very active part.⁹¹⁷ Another fierce confrontation, rekindled by the same debate on the status of women erupted between these LMS missionaries at Inyati

⁹¹²Ella Sharp to L.M.S., November 24, 1904, (Serowe) SOAS: B64 19/12.

⁹¹³ *Sargent Report*, (1906) pp.32-8, 15.

⁹¹⁴E. Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., September 8, 1904, SOAS: B65 F JE.

⁹¹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹¹⁶J. T. Brown to L.M.S. November 4, 1904; Partridge to L.M.S. November 10, 1904; Sharp to L.M.S., November 24, 1904.

⁹¹⁷J.B Brown (Secretary of the SADC) to L.M.S, March 7-9, 1913, (Tigerkloof), SOAS: B75 F3.

in April 1910. This parallel division between the traditionalists and modernists resulted from the theological and biblical interpretation. Mr Willoughby's comments, vexed by Mary Partridge's feminist views caused one of the bitterest exchanges. Willoughby had accused Miss Partridge of being more theologically ignorant than some of her pupils with 'black faces' who he said could even write better English than she.⁹¹⁸

Another hindrance to Sharp's school work, was the periodical absence of boys, who had to go to the cattle posts. She wrote that:

'One (?) other which is a great hindrance in Educational work all over the Protectorate is that nearly all our boys have to go out in turns to look after the cattle at the cattle posts. The Masarwa slaves seem to be dwindling in number, and the Bechuana boys have increasingly to go out and help to look after the thousands of cattle in this country.'⁹¹⁹

The missionaries were very critical of this traditional way of life because it kept their students and church members away from the station for many months. During the ploughing season, in particular, boys and young men could not attend Church services and school regularly. Instead of suggesting a more practical means of dealing with the problem, the missionaries instead looked forward to a time when all the Ngwato cattle were either dead or sold.⁹²⁰

In 1898 Howard Williams made an interesting observation, that the Church membership was dominated by men, saying:

'The thuto (gospel) is quite an adjunct of national life ... The small proportion of women who attend the services (is notable). On the Church Roll too there is a large preponderance of male members.'⁹²¹

This only applied to the adult Church membership, because the Sunday school was full of girls, as a result of the fact that the young boys had to seasonally stay at the cattle posts in order to care for their family livestock and only returned to school intermittently. During the ploughing season girls also did not attend school regularly, since they had to help their mothers with ploughing, cultivation and harvesting. This economic cycle was therefore a crucial factor, which the missionaries needed to take into consideration in planning their educational programmes.⁹²²

⁹¹⁸ Tom Brown (Kudumane) to L.M.S., April 29, 1910, SOAS.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid.

⁹²⁰ *Founders' Week Convention Report*, (1895) op cit, p.168.

⁹²¹ *London Missionary Society Reports*, 3/1, Phalapye, 1898, H. Williams.

⁹²² Edwin Lloyd to L.M.S., January 13, 1889, (Shoshong) SOAS: B46 F1 JA; E. Sharp to L.M.S., February 8, 1915, (Serowe) SOAS: B77 F2 JE.

Another hinderance to Sharp's work came in 1903, when her personal reputation was at stake because she was suspected of having an affair with the magistrate, Mr Pazella, a man old enough to be her father. This being against the policy of the LMS, Willoughby ordered an investigation and in the meantime she was suspended from duty pending an inquiry.⁹²³ Despite all these challenges, by 1909 Miss Sharp was making an immense contribution in fostering and achieving her educational aims and objectives. She wrote of this saying:

‘I have (taken) some active part in the religious work of the mission ... of course, you know that we always teach in our day - school, and I think this gives our children a good knowledge of Scripture things. Some of our boys and girls are also in Mr Jennings' catechumen's class.’⁹²⁴

It is also interesting to note that Ella Sharp also continued to partly see the aims of education as a means of spreading Christianity. In this, education had to provide ‘a good knowledge of Scripture things’. Despite this, she still had a specific aim: to do her best to begin something wonderful for the Ngwato women, because her male counterparts had completely ignored the need for establishing or implementing any training programmes, to facilitate that purpose. But because of the intense opposition within the Ngwato leadership hierarchy, she eventually abandoned this aim and tried to at least introduce an industrial education, which would have provided young women with necessary technical skills. This project also failed because of the Ngwato bias against her role as a woman, which resulted in lack of funds. The whole general idea however was to see the growth of Christianity, commerce and education as it happened in the 18th century Scottish industrial revolution, evolving from the same source. Everything being equal except the language and the cultural factor, the combination of education and Christianity was expected to provide a conducive environment for economic boom. In the Highlands of Scotland, during the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, this had led to the alleviation of poverty and a rapid spread of the Gospel.⁹²⁵ Inspired by the same ideas, Sharp had hoped that the combination of orthodoxy, education and westernization (civilization) would repeat that process. It was, possibly, for this reason that missionary education closely associated literary learning to preaching. It was also this tying up of the advantages of education and Christianity, which became the means through which cultural colonization of Ngwato life took place.⁹²⁶ While the missionaries were not very concerned with how education affected the day - to - day life of the people, they saw it as a means of civilizing and Christianizing them. Sharp, for instance, saw some of the effects of education resulting from what

⁹²³W.C. Willoughby (Serowe) to J.P. Sharp, June 18, 1903, SOAS: B68 F1.

⁹²⁴Ella Sharp to L.M.S., July 29, 1909, (Serowe), SOAS: B71 F3 JE.

⁹²⁵ S. Mechie, *The Church and Scottish Social Development, 1780-1870*, pp. 136 -140.

⁹²⁶Also see Neil Parsons, ‘Education and Development in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Botswana to 1965’, in Michael Crowder, (1984), *Education for Development*, p. 25; M.L. Kgasa, (1939), *Thuto Ke Eng (What is Learning)*.

she terms as:

'... a good grounding in scripture truths, ... cleaner living, better thinking, and raising the standard of life.'⁹²⁷

J. Richardson of Vryburg, commissioned to make an assessment of LMS educational programmes in 1899, including Palapye, also expressed the same idea of civilizing tendencies of the western form of education, saying:

'They (Ngwato teachers) speak English, and are patterns of neatness and cleanliness in person & dress & manners. They are also good teachers.'⁹²⁸

Illiteracy is here equated to an uncivilized society, while literacy is seen as a vehicle of communication, which thus facilitated the acceptance and growth of Christianity and the European way of life. This may have been the reason why missionaries were in favour of a change in such areas as the marriage legal systems. This was in contrast with the view held by some modern historians, who believed that the missionary understanding and the process of missionary education were only religious in their function and aim. It embraced a wide range of things which drastically affected the economic, religious and political factors of Ngwato life.

The illiterate were considered to be socially inferior, implying that widespread literary education would have led to rapid understanding of Christian principles and western culture. They also saw literary education as a tool to help their converts have increased ability to comprehend and communicate Christianity more effectively. Although the missionary education was basically elementary, it was not only intended to help students to simply read and write their names or read a simple message, but was directed at facilitating the spread of Christianity and also to create an awareness of the importance of western lifestyle. It did not however help the women to effectively engage in those social, economic and political activities which maintained the male superiority status. The major difference between the missionary type of education and the Ngwato education was that the latter trained its youth to be able to effectively utilise the local resources, in order to maximise economic production.⁹²⁹ However, as we have already pointed out, in doing this the Ngwato systems equally tied women to the home as well as increasing their dependence on men.

⁹²⁷E. Sharp to L.M.S., April 11, 1921, (Serowe), SOAS: B84 F1 JE

⁹²⁸J. Richardson (Vryburg) to L.M.S., September 25, 1899, SOAS: B56 F2.

⁹²⁹T.P.Mgadla, (1989), *Missionary and Western Education in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1859-1904: The Case of the Bangwato*. This deals with the question of missionary and Ngwato systems of education in great detail.

It has to be acknowledged that many historians have already critically, assessed the missionary educational methods and reached the general conclusion that they were very inadequate and alien.⁹³⁰ Even within the missionary circles, we find that many were dissatisfied, for instance, John Moffat, who consistently campaigned for the improvement of the LMS education. Although Lloyd was himself a missionary among the BaNgwato and in a better position to solve the problem he also complained, in 1895, about the inadequacy of the LMS educational system. He told the Directors, missionaries and supporters of the LMS, gathered for the celebration of the Society's centenary in London, that the educational methods and approaches generally adopted were very deficient, regardless of the 'Forward Movement Scheme' in education, proposed and piloted by the Foreign Secretary a few years before this.⁹³¹ Due to lack of funds, the LMS had failed to provide suitable school buildings, or properly trained teachers and educational facilities.

The women missionaries, especially Misses Young and Sharp, however tried to redefine the aims of education, as well as point out the fact that there was a need for a more practical and pragmatic approach, which had to be deeply rooted in the everyday life of the people. This attempt would have related education to the local needs, resources and cultural modes of production of the people.

Although it is obvious that the missionaries attached great importance to literary education, we have already seen that the first female enquirers were not given the same treatment as males. This tendency was also supported by the Ngwato society, whose notions were largely patriarchal in nature and function. The Ngwato Church, therefore, continued to sustain that traditional male superiority complex. This process was, by the acceptance of the Ngwato religious formation, centred on the household head, who represented a collective male ancestorship. This contradicted or even undermined the Christian belief, that Christianity elevated human dignity to a direct communication with the divine. In this new religious structure therefore men's role continued unchanged. In the past, they had acted as high priests and officiated in religious activities, such as sacrifice and prayer rendered to the **badimo**. The Ngwato Church system and structure, was also organised on the basis, whereby men played a leading role in the life of the Church, a process which discouraged and excluded women from participating in religious activities. The missionary education, in the early years, simply reinforced that cultural pattern. The women missionaries did their best to reject this and tried to bring women into the centre of Church life. Mary Partridge, who worked for sometime among the Ngwato in 1899, aimed at 'rescuing' girls from what she saw as the bad influence of the Tswana culture, by introducing the idea of Girls Boarding

⁹³⁰ Ibid.

⁹³¹ *Founders' Week Convention Report*, (1895) op cit, p.169.

Schools.⁹³² By isolating these girls from the rest of the society, she hoped to eradicate from their minds what she saw as the undesirable tendencies and then introduce them to more civilized ways. It was hoped that these girls would become future wives of Christian husbands. But such educational programs were not always successful because of lack of funds, suitable buildings and properly trained teachers. It was also impossible to keep these young girls in school when their mothers needed them to help with ploughing, harvesting or for other important family engagements.⁹³³ This however does not suggest that parents knew nothing of the benefits of education, as some missionaries claimed, but that they themselves failed to adapt and relate their educational system to the existing Ngwato social and economic needs. The provision of good liberal education for the people needed adequate financial support, which the Society was obviously lacking, and also a deliberate policy to relate it to the needs of the people. With proper planning these girls would have provided a valuable replacement for the women missionaries and their services to the church and country as a whole. However, the opening of the Moffat Institution had further masculinized Church offices. The decision not to admit women, throughout the history of the Institution in Shoshong, meant that they were far outpaced by their counterparts in acquiring educational training. One of the major conditions of admission to the Seminary was that these men were to be accompanied by their wives, to continue what was seen as their cultural role. In addition to the fact that they were to continue their role as housewives, they were also expected to adopt European family values, as they interacted with the wives of the missionaries. In 1895, for instance, Lloyd still insisted that:

‘The family life of the mission houses has, undoubtedly, a splendid influence upon our people. The wives of your missionaries seek to elevate and refine the women and girls by holding services for them, and teaching them to sew, knit, and do many useful things.’⁹³⁴

He furthermore said that:

‘The advent of more white people will, we hope teach our people much in relation to the home. Best of all, the position of woman is slowly but surely being elevated, and the children are receiving more care and attention from their parents. Family worship among the Bechwana may almost be termed a popular institution, so universal is it.’⁹³⁵

This may explain why a candidate had to be willing to bring his family into the compounds of the institution and why this requirement was strictly enforced. In 1895 Willoughby still insisted on the establishment of a Boys Boarding School in Palapye, which he hoped would provide young men with practical instructions. He wrote of this, saying:

⁹³²M. Partridge (Palapye) to L.M.S., October 4, 1900, SOAS: B58 F3.

⁹³³Ibid.

⁹³⁴. *Founders' Week Convention*, op cit, p.168.

⁹³⁵. Ibid, p.172.

'I referred in my last letter to a little scheme for the establishment of a Boarding School for boys at this place. There is a need for such a school here, and with the coming Railway it is hard to say what it might grow into in the future. Miss Young has got her school every morning. The cost of the actual education would be nil. What I should like to see is a simple building or series of native huts that would accommodate say 20 scholars.'⁹³⁶

Still, even in the 1920s, only young men could become teachers outside Serowe as representatives of Khama's power. The exclusion of women from the missionary religious training also contributed to them being excluded from leadership roles, as deacons or church elders.

One of the most important, special needs of this work was not more European women missionaries, but more trained indigenous women for the work. The Ngwato male dominated and controlled Church did not, however, make any effort to provide for this specific and practical training, which would have met the needs of Ngwato women. Such women, trained and fitted for the service, would have played an important role in helping others. The training of these Ngwato women, who had the advantage of language and culture, would have facilitated the continuation of the work started by these European women missionaries. These Ngwato women would also have had the advantage of understanding the complications of their male - dominated society. Therefore, the future for women did not depend on accepting an alien culture or type of Christianity, nor the old Ngwato way either, but something new, if women were to have a leading role. The new way, however, had its strong foundations in the Ngwato way of life, not the European one. The transforming power of the Gospel produced a new Ngwato society, which did not necessarily reject everything Ngwato. In this crucial transitional period the women missionaries played a leading role. They had facilitated this task by opening the way for the Ngwato women and girls to enter the missionary educational system, where secular subjects such as needlework, reading and writing, as well as religious instructions were taught. This began to melt the prejudice against women and began a process, which neither the Ngwato men or the male European missionaries could stop. Dr. John Philip of the Cape LMS missions of the nineteenth century and Livingstone always said that once people were awakened by learning to read, things could never be the same again.⁹³⁷ N. Morton's observation is also very interesting. He wrote that:

'... if we try to describe the Christian understanding of the whole person, then, we describe a person who fully embodies a sense of the common good that includes the broader culture, but is not limited to it. For her ends are informed by something more ultimate and her talents developed in accordance with those ends. She draws life and inspiration from her culture, but her ultimate source of light would come from God.

⁹³⁶W.C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., March 18, 1895, SOAS: B52 F1 JB.

⁹³⁷ John Philip, (1828), *Research in South Africa*, 2 vols; *Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence*, (1961), pp.100, 108.

Her service to her community would be her witness to the fullness of life.’⁹³⁸

7.6. The Response of the 19th Century Ngwato Women

The contribution of women missionaries created a new image for Ngwato women, who subsequently responded positively and began doing some interesting work in that changing cultural context. Motivated by their Christian zeal, they responded to those cultural problems and questions of the past and sought to raise their roles in a new dimension.

One of these Ngwato women was Queen Semane, whose response subsequently contributed to the political, social and religious life of the people. In the following sub-section we try to describe her contribution and also to show how she inspired other Ngwato women and mothers to feature in public matters.

i). Queen Semane’s Courage in the Face of Male Dominance

To adequately represent the struggle of women, I will describe how Semane, who while facing an incredible cultural obstacle, courageously fought her way into a leading position on behalf of the women folk.

i) a). Family Historical Background

It was during the Sekgoma Khama conflict in 1875 that a small group of Ngwato people left Shoshong and sought refuge among the BaKgatla, who were then living in the Transvaal. Among those immigrants were the parents of Setlhoko and Matshitshi, the girl he later married.

Both Setlhoko, himself a ploughman and carpenter by trade, and Matshitshi, a housewife had never been to school. They, like most Ngwato couples, had been married according to traditional custom.

At Mosetlha (now known as Saulspoort in the Transvaal) they met Gonin, a French missionary, who introduced them to the teachings of Christianity, which they might have already had some knowledge of, from their contacts with LMS missionaries at Shoshong, where they had come from. They were subsequently converted to Christianity, and re-married with a Christian ceremony by Gonin, as this was a pre-requisite for Church baptism and membership.

Setlhoko’s devout commitment to Christianity is expressed in the way he regularly conducted morning

⁹³⁸Morton, N., (1985), *The Journey is Home*, pp.21-2.

and evening family prayers, in the courtyard outside his huts.⁹³⁹ Within a short time of his conversion he had also become a deacon in the French Church, as well as an evangelist soon afterwards. In spite of his piety and his decision to bring his children up under very strict religious training, Setlhoko remained very committed to the Ngwato past and cultural heritage. On his death bed in 1912, he still insisted on the Ngwato custom of male superiority and patriarchal dominance, by recognising Segotso, his eldest son, as heir of his household functions and responsibilities.⁹⁴⁰ By this tradition, immense family religious, social and political powers were transferred from father to son.

In September 1879, Matshitshi had given birth at Masetlha, to a girl named Semane. She had been strictly trained in cultural roles, so much so that she fitted very well into the Ngwato traditional female roles such as: fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, stamping sorghum corn using a mortar and pestle, building mud houses, making artistic **lolwapa** walls, sowing seeds, hoeing, harvesting, and threshing etc. While this religious and cultural background and upbringing prepared Semane for one of the most important tasks amongst the BaNgwato, it also reinforced the cultural conceptions of womanhood, which remained a hinderance to her efforts to contribute to the development of the society.

Sekgoma's death, in 1883, brought an end to Ngwato civil strife and with it the return of the exiles, including Setlhoko together with his family, to Palapye after eighteen years of exile. Semane was by then 14 years old. In 1894 the Ngwato officials, in recognition of Semane's ability, handed her over to assist Mrs Young with educational work as well as to undergo in-service teacher training.⁹⁴¹ Semane's general progress especially her determination as a scholar, was very impressive and outstanding. In July, 1895 Mrs Young, in recognition of this, wrote saying:

‘There are many cases of a mild form of smallpox about. When Semane had had it for a week only she came back to school. I sent her home and she was very sad. I saw tears in her eyes.’

Subsequently, she was chosen as one of the teachers on a full-time basis in Young's school and became a committed inspiration, to both the teaching service and the women folk for many years. This process

⁹³⁹ E. Haile, (1939), *Semane: Queen of the Bangwato*, pp.10-11.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, p.14.

was, in 1900, affected by an important change in Khama's social life. Khama had decided to marry Semane, his fourth wife, after the death of his first wife Keaise, generally known after the birth of his first-born as Mma-Besi. She had died in 1889. He then married Gasekate, a near relative of King Bathoen, of the BaNgwaketse in 1890, who also died shortly afterwards. His third wife, Sefhakwane was a daughter of Motshokone, a small chieftain in his state. Regarding this Willoughby wrote saying:

'Yes Khama has married again. His wife is a member of the tribe, and a woman of no position. She is not a member of the Church, but as far as I can gather she is anxious to learn, and favourably inclined toward Christianity. I knew nothing of her until Khama had arranged it all, but what little I have seen since has rather favourably impressed me. But I am in the note of interrogating stage. I think the match was not very popular in the tribe. It is never wise for a man to marry a girl of his own congregation, unless he is prepared to resign the pastorate; because other girls and other mothers begin at once to see how lamentably deficient the man is in taste and judgement.'⁹⁴²

Having married Sefhakwane in 1896, Khama had to divorce her for misconduct in 1899. Howard Williams, writing about this incident, told the Directors that:

'You will regret to hear of another trouble which has come upon Khama in his old age. He has had to seek a divorce from his wife and this was granted last week by the magistrate. If you have any recollections of the 'lady' you will probably have concluded that she was not fitted to be the wife of a man like Khama.'⁹⁴³

It was then that he married Semane in 1900.⁹⁴⁴ She was twenty-one years old then and for the next 37 years she was an asset to the Ngwato Church and community as a whole.⁹⁴⁵ It is also worth noting here that as in the past, Khama had followed the traditional marriage procedures and arrangements, by sending two of his trusted friends and relatives, Matlhodi and Motsholakgetsi to go and ask for her from Setlhoko and Manaesi, his cousin. It was after these traditional procedures, such as **patlo** described above, had been completed that the marriage took place in the Church followed by a reception at Mr Willoughby's house.

Seeing the immense impact and contribution of Ngwato women such as Semane, the LMS Directors were pressing the local missionaries to consider the inclusion of women in Church leadership hierarchy. It was for this reason that, following Semane's public engagements, there was not only an upsurge in the general activities of women in the 1910s, but that they began to penetrate the Church leadership structures. For instance, Jennings found, among Sekgoma II's people at Nekati, two deaconess co-

⁹⁴²W. C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., June 29, 1896, SOAS: B53 F2 JC.

⁹⁴³H. Williams (Palapye) to L.M.S., July 21, 1899, SOAS: B56.

⁹⁴⁴W. C. Willoughby (Palapye) to L.M.S., October 4, 1900, SOAS: B52 F3.

⁹⁴⁵Burns, J.H.L., op cit, p.12.

operating with three deacons.⁹⁴⁶ In 1913 Secretary Hawkins instructed the Serowe congregation to vote deaconesses into its hierarchy and in Molepolole, R.H. Lewis (of Molepolole), responded to this call, observing that:

‘In the past, the Church life of your native Churches, seems to have been very much a handful of men, wisely enough selected as leaders have determined it to be. The motherhood of the Church and the influences which come from the development of its young people have played very little part ... (and) the Church is suffering today. The men have got to look upon the women as their equals in Church life, and they don’t take kindly to it at all.’⁹⁴⁷

In 1914 Lewis was transferred to Serowe, where Semane had become the most influential deaconess ever. This placed her in a powerful position, through which she was able to structure the character of an expanding host of deaconesses. This was a great achievement, considering the fact that since the origin of the Church in 1859 until the 1890s the focus of the Church leadership was on the basis of traditional male functions. Although the Directors had now realized that there was an urgent need to have women missionaries in their stations in Bechuanaland, it took them a long time to accept that the major success of this work depended on indigenous women being equipped for the job. Through the inspiration of these European single women missionaries, they realized that such women as Semane were beginning to penetrate the Church structures and play a leading role in organising Church choirs, prayer groups, Sunday School meetings etc, which began to open up a whole new world for women. Although this was something new, it is evident that it was not European. Semane, for instance, still kept in touch with the everyday expectations of a Ngwato woman and wife, as she endeavoured to transform the social and cultural development of the Ngwato Church and society in general. She also continued to teach literary education and conduct Church classes for children and women, combining Scripture and hymn singing as a Ngwato woman and within the Ngwato culture. In 1815 Sharp wrote saying that:

‘At one time the women were all taught in one class in the Sunday School by Semane. But this last year we have had to divide them up into three classes ...’⁹⁴⁸

Semane also participated in many educational programmes and countrywide public religious and political forums. She was indeed an immense asset to the development of the country as a whole. By 1922 all female catechumens in Serowe would pass through the hands of deaconesses from Sunday school, which was, exclusively being taught by a group of deaconesses, led by Semane, to female family forums.⁹⁴⁹ However, unlike male evangelists and teachers, deaconesses were never posted to neighbouring congregations outside their own village or town. This was because, in Ngwato minds,

⁹⁴⁶A. Jennings to L.M.S. November 20, 1910, (Durban), SOAS: B72 F8 JA.

⁹⁴⁷*L.M.S. Reports*, 5/1 Molepolole 1913 by R.H. Lewis, 1914. Lewis fought very hard and was successful in altering the nature of Church leadership.

⁹⁴⁸*L.M.S. Reports*, 6/1, School Report for Serowe, 1914, by E. Sharp.

⁹⁴⁹R.H. Lewis, ‘General Drought’, *Annual Reports of the L.M.S.*, 1922.

males were still the official messengers through whom the extension of religious and political matters could take place.

One of the major achievements of Semane was when she became the first Ngwato woman to hold the post of a Sunday School Superintendent, together with her deaconess position. While this meant that she had a very tight schedule, especially since she still had to perform her cultural role as a mother and wife, it was a great achievement. Her weekly schedule was as follows: she attended morning and afternoon services on Sundays where she enriched the worship services with her dynamic singing talents. Every Monday morning she was at the sunrise Church prayer meeting. Having started training women for evangelistic work, every Monday afternoon she held a women's class for women evangelists and Sunday school workers and led evangelistic outreaches and open air meetings, in order to spread the glad news in the town. On Tuesdays, at sunrise, she had a class for men and women enquirers in her home. The presence of men in a female led class was a sign that prejudice, against women taking leadership roles in the community, was slowly melting away. In the afternoon of every Tuesday, she conducted knitting classes for young women.⁹⁵⁰ On Thursday mornings she attended **Dikaelelo** (instruction) classes, which had been started in 1902, while in the afternoon she conducted a class for men and women deacons, who were subsequently sent out to teach mothers in their homes. By 1939 the **Dikaelelo** movement had spread throughout the region and could be found in forty-four villages. On Fridays, she had a prayer meeting for enquirers' class. For the purpose of these meetings for the enquirers class, she divided the town into three sections - the west, east and central, into smaller home groups. On Friday afternoons she led a preparation class for the Sunday School teachers.⁹⁵¹

Semane's activities brought a new input into the development of Christianity among the Ngwato women, who increasingly began to participate in the spread of education and Christianity in their country. These activities led by women, amongst other women, could however not take place in the **Kgotla**. It was also viewed as improper for women to stand up in a mixed **Kgotla** audience and preach. For instance, when the Prince of Wales visited Serowe in 1925, the missionary, R.H. Lewis, alleged, that women were not allowed into the **Kgotla**.⁹⁵² However, this did not stop women from continuing their efforts to play a leading role in their society. In the 1920s Semane had become the President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union over the whole of Bechuanaland. This office allowed her to carry out the work of fighting against drink problems and other unhappy moral consequences, begun by Khama in the 1870s. Speaking to the 1895 LMS centenary audience Edwin Lloyd said that:

⁹⁵⁰E. Haile, (1939), op. cit, pp.20-22.

⁹⁵¹Ibid, p.23-4.

⁹⁵²R.H. Lewis (Serowe) to Barrandale, July 11, 1925, SOAS: B87 F3.

'Nearly every native town has its drinking bar licensed by the British Government for the sale of intoxicating liquors to white men only; but it is perpetual temptation to the Bechwana to see liquor sold and drunk before their eyes. Said chief Bathoen to me, at Bristol: "Missionary, we have seen the fountain of clothing, the fountain of Churches, and the fountain of English houses; we have also seen the fountain of the Word of God at the Bible House. But missionary there is one fountain which we have not seen - the fountain of strong drink. Why do they not show us the fountain of brandy? Is it not because they are ashamed to show us such a fountain of evil." ⁹⁵³

In 1933, Semane attended a Temperance Convention in Johannesburg, in her own right, as the President of the Ngwato Women's Temperance Union.⁹⁵⁴

Serowe women, such as MmaKhama and Babone began to have discussions with their missionary and even challenged him to do more for women. These complaints carried a lot of weight because the LMS had failed to design specific programs, explicitly for women's work. As in the educational department (elementary schools), it was left to the efforts of those individual women, like Sharp, to carry these without any adequate financial or other practical support from the mother body or the resident missionary. This was bound to end in failure and disaster. In 1905 Rev. J.T. Brown, the long serving Secretary of the B.D.C., wrote saying:

'There is plenty of work to be done among the women in our missions, not zezana work, perhaps, but work ... which a missionary's wife cannot do owing to domestic duties. Surely, if we can raise the tone of womanhood of the Bechuana we shall be doing more for the next generation than anything else we can do ... u(ntil) we change the attitude of both men and women towards a purer womanhood we cannot hope for much growth in spiritual matters.'⁹⁵⁵

It is this general negligence of the plight of women that both the Ngwato women and J.T. Brown were challenging. This same cry, concerning the work among women, was echoed by an LMS deputation team visiting southern and central Africa in 1913. Reporting its findings the Deputation team wrote saying:

'Lady missionaries who are trained nurses with a knowledge of midwifery would find great opportunity ... This means of approach to the native woman is one the importance of which cannot be exaggerated.'⁹⁵⁶

The unsatisfactory conditions of the work among women had earlier been highlighted by Khama when he was in England in 1895. When interviewed, by a lady in London, regarding this he complained that whoever was in charge lacked zeal in developing training in spinning and weaving. Although Howard

⁹⁵³ *Founders' Week Convention Report*, op cit, p.170.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.23-5.

⁹⁵⁵ J.T. Brown, *The Chronicle of the L.M.S*, Vol. XIV, 1905, p.47.

⁹⁵⁶ Report of Mrs John May, Mr Talbot, E.B. Wilson, & Mr F.W. Hawkins, Deputation to South And Central Africa, January - July, 1924, p.2.

Williams' wife, in 1904, had taught Shoshong girls how to sew, followed by Ella Sharp, who later taught the Serowe girls crocheting - these efforts were isolated and done on an individual basis. The Society seemed to have no plan or concerted efforts for implementing these ideas.⁹⁵⁷

Before concluding this chapter, it has to be pointed out that within the capitalist and imperialist economic and political systems of the nineteenth century, women were however still culturally dependent and dominated. But an interpretation of the missionary ethnographic notions has shown that women were not completely silent during this period. They struggled to move to the heart of Ngwato life. This movement of women was not confined to the Ngwato only, it was also evident among other Tswana ethnic groups. Among Montshiwa's people, the BaRolong, who lived along the southern most borders, women were outspoken and always in disagreement with the authorities, although they never became deacons or evangelists.⁹⁵⁸ John MacKenzie, for instance, wrote:

'Accordingly while one of the male members of the Church was engaged in prayer, Montshiwa appeared at the chapel door - a naked European sword in hand. the services were interrupted and doubtless many were terrified. Montsioe ordered the worshippers immediately to disperse; but he was answered by one of the two women (who had earlier preached and encouraged the Christians), that they were then doing nothing but what the chief himself had formerly sanctioned them - nothing but what was required of them as 'people of God's Word' - and that they should just go on with the service.'⁹⁵⁹

At Molepolole, the Kwena capital, there was also an interesting historical development amongst a number of prominent, educated, women, who sought legal avenues to advance their interests during the early 1900s. In the early part of 1912, for instance, the marriage of Lena, Chief Rauwe's daughter to King Kealeboga Sechele II, led to a series of religious and political struggles. Chief Rauwe of the BaKhutshe, of Selepeng village (see chapter 5) had in 1908 replaced the LMS mission with the Anglican Church.

Having being married by the King, Lena now used her influence to introduce Anglicanism in Molepolole, which resulted in Anglican morning and evening prayers held at the Molepolole **Kgotla**. Subsequently, Lena helped an Evangelist, George Maswe, to acquire an unused shop for their services.

⁹⁵⁷'King Khama Interviewed by a Lady in London; Christianity and Native Wives,' *Christian World*, 12 September 1895; Report 3/3, Shoshong for 1904, H. Williams.

⁹⁵⁸John Mackenzie to L.M.S., June 24, 1862, (Shoshong) SOAS: B32 F1 JC.

⁹⁵⁹J. Mackenzie (Shoshong) to L.M.S., June 27, 1862, SOAS: B32 F5 JA.

This eventually became the Anglican Church of St. Paul's in 1912, which is still in existence today.⁹⁶⁰

While Lena's contribution to the development of the Anglican Church in Molepolole was immensely outstanding, her marriage to Sechele II led to the divorce of Phetogo in 1914. Of this account Jeff Ramsay wrote:

'The following year she turned to the magistrate seeking support for herself and protection of the political as well as property rights of her sons, which she feared would be compromised by Sechele II's favouritism towards his third wife, Lena. Dissatisfied with the magistrate's initial unwillingness to impose specific conditions on her exhusband, she hired lawyers to undertake civil proceedings on her behalf, resulting in a 1917 settlement in her favour. For her part, Lena later proved equally vigorous in protecting the inheritance of her son, MacSechele (father of Kgosi Moitali).'⁹⁶¹

Similar struggles occurred in other Tswana ethnic groups, such as the BaNgwaketse. In 1910 Ofetotse, forced her exhusband, Kgosi Seepapitso II to a legal understanding. In June 1921, Gagoangwe, a powerful Queen mother, afraid of the implications of the Mothowagae's controversy (see chapter 5), acted as guardian-regent for her grand-son. She also kept watch over any political and religious development, which might have weakened the power of her grandson and heir to the throne. She did this by controlling new religious developments in the capital in favour of Bathoen II. She also attacked the British administration for taking a neutral attitude regarding Mothowagae, who she said was a bad man, who taught bad doctrines. In order to control political and religious events herself, she removed regent Tshosa from office, and then ruled briefly, before being succeeded by her daughter Ntebogang in 1924. To control opposition to her rule and policies and to bring an end to the Mothowagae controversy, Ntebogang used force and persecution. Through this she denied Mothowagae, the right to preach and organise his own church, because she felt that this was divisive to the political unity of the BaNgwaketse.⁹⁶² However, in 1926, she forced the BaNgwaketse to grant permission to her church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) to do medical and evangelistic work.⁹⁶³

The women's gradual advance and gains in education had to some extent, therefore, began to offer them

⁹⁶⁰Personal Interview with David Mananga and Florence Hitchfield, Molepolole, Botswana, June, 1992. They also gave me a copy of paper which was prepared for the 75 Years Jubilee, St. Paul's Church, 1912-1987.

⁹⁶¹Jeff Ramsay, 'Back to the Future: Quarrelsome Women', in *Mmegi/The Reporter*, Vol 10, No 7, 19-25 February, 1993.

⁹⁶²Resident Commissioner to the Resident Magistrate in Kanye, R.C. July 14, 1921, 10/11, BNA; Also Regent Gagoangwe to the Resident Commissioner, November 11, 1921, 10/11, BNA.

⁹⁶³Regent Ntebogang to the Government Secretary, March 1926, 10/11, BNA.

new importance in the home and in certain public activities.

The debate against women's leadership role in the educational department was a reflection of the gradual change of the position of women in the society. The venture of women into what used to be a male power domain, became a threat to the Ngwato officials and the general male population, which still argued that men should receive pride of place at every stage of the expansion of educational opportunity. The cultural premises, that education could not remedy the basic facts of life, was now being challenged. Women were not only penetrating the educational structures, but the political sphere as well. The response of these Ngwato women to politics was a very interesting story. However, these women were extremely and seriously divided over their claim to have a role in political life. They launched a series of political struggles, which were directly against each other, but in support of men. Although the final targets of these articulate women and their male supporters were male leaders, we find that the impact of women was evident in decision-making. This was in spite of the insistence, by the Ngwato culture, that women could not be allowed to participate in **Kgotla** political debates and decision-making. This indirect involvement of the women, which initially involved a small minority of women, belonging to the royal family, finally caused a whole wave of cultural changes across all classes. Through this, women began to gain a new political image of their own. This impact or influence exerted by these women, on the political front, was especially evident during Sekgoma II's reign. In this period, the decision-making process was shifting from the **Kgotla** into other areas, which were more in favour of the educated women. It was also due to the involvement of Ngwato women into politics, that more women began to climb the Church hierarchy. In this way the school and the Church were also becoming important factors, through which a person could ascend into the hierarchy of the upper social class.⁹⁶⁴ While previously, women only entered the **Kgotla** to give witness before a host of angry men, in this period, they were well represented by the male allies, through whom they clearly expressed their views. When Sekgoma returned to Serowe in 1922, Church growth and the social and ecclesiastical dominance of Semane was becoming inseparable. This however became a challenge, which created an unfriendly atmosphere between Khama's key supporters and Sekgoma and his close allies, especially Simon Ratshosa, who supported the former by virtue of his marriage to his daughter Oratile.⁹⁶⁵ The suspension of Simon Ratshosa for adultery, both from the Church by Lewis and from the leadership of the private school by Khama, had previously created an intense rivalry between these two camps. Simon Ratshosa's political influence rested on the fact that he had married Oratile, who was herself very outspoken. This public involvement of women introduced a new element into Ngwato

⁹⁶⁴Ngcongco, L., 'Tswana Political Tradition', in J. Holm & P. Molutsi (eds), (1989), *Democracy in Botswana*.

⁹⁶⁵J.T. Brown (Claremont) to L.M.S, July 7, 1921, SOAS: B84 F2; R.H. Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S, April 24, 1922, SOAS: B84 F2.

public politics, and as a result women were commonly accused of poisoning and witchcraft. Sekgoma now accused his own sister, Milly (Phethu's wife), for an attempt on his life. Both Milly and Phethu were full Church members. Khama's daughters, Babonye and MmaKhama, also led one of the most severe attacks on Semane, accusing her of poisoning Sekgoma for the benefit of her son, a legal regent to the throne, Tshekedi Khama. This conflict became so serious that at one point Semane had to flee to the missionary's house for refuge, as women, headmen and many Church members joined the assault on her.⁹⁶⁶ With the death of Khama in 1923 and the church ageing, male core leadership positions began to move to women. Oratile Ratshosa and her female allies continued to persecute the Church members, while Sekgoma directed his fiercest attacks against the publication of John C. Harris' book entitled *Khama, the Great African Chief*, (1922). The book had been prepared under the auspices of the LMS and made a derogatory attack on the Ratshosa family, as a gang of scoundrels. Sekgoma was outraged by this attack on his sisters and other relatives. Sekgoma and Ratshosa condemned the book, with the strongest of terms, as an abuse and insult to the whole Ngwato nation, which eventually put a strain on the relationship between the former and the missionary. This also reinforced the partisan outrage and further inspired women's political activity. Oratile used the book against the Church leadership, of which Semane and other women were equally attacked, for its moral critique and attack on her husband and father.

Eventually, the role played by Oratile and her allies, most of whom were of royal descent, forced a shift of **Kgotla** political power towards the Ratshosa family. While this brought Sekgoma and the Ratshosa family into the centre of political power, the old pillars and allies of Khama, such as John Ratshosa, who had been Khama's secretary, Phethu Mphoeng, a wealthy man, who had returned to Khama from his father's villages and married Khama's daughter, Milly and governed Mmadinare and nearby villages for Khama since 1904; Oteng, Phethu's brother, who ran a business and taught in the Mmadinare school, as well as the Raditladi brothers Lebang and Kelebogile, were accused by Sekgoma of plotting against him.⁹⁶⁷ After Sekgoma's death on 16th November 1925, the role played by women continued to stir conflicts and to determine political debates and decisions.

7.7. Summary

In summary, therefore, it must be pointed out that, while the idea of women missionaries was a brilliant

⁹⁶⁶R.H. Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., November 16 & 20, 1925, SOAS: B87 F4; T. Mooko, 'The Role of Women in Bangwato Politics' B.A. Thesis, University of Botswana, 1985; R.H. Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., April 20, 1926, SOAS: B88 F2.

⁹⁶⁷E. Sharp (Serowe) to L.M.S., March 5, 1923, SOAS: B85 F5; R.H. Lewis (Serowe) to L.M.S., August 24, 1923, SOAS: B85 F3.



Fig.46

Khama (middle row far left), his eldest son and successor, Sekgoma (top - J.D. Hepburn, (1895) p.326), Khama's wife (Semane) standing next to Sekgoma's son Seretse, who became the first President of Botswana, and Tshekedi (far right), the youngest son and regent of the BaNgwato at Sekgoma's death. At the bottom, on the steps of the church after the wedding of Tshekedi (LMS Africa Pictures, op. cit.).



Fig.47

A celebration of a Church fashionable wedding at the Palapye Church (LMS Africa Pictures - SOAS). Below is typical of such weddings. Simon Ratshosa, seated, left, at his wedding, started the first public or **Kgotla** schools. Later he became a nationalist, critical of the Protectorate administration (T. Tlou, (1984) p.140).

one, their successes in winning the hearts of Ngwato women depended on their effectiveness in integrating Christianity with the everyday experiences of the people. Their inadequacies and failures to fundamentally re-think the importance of integrating the theoretical and epistemological implications of Christianity with Ngwato experiences and circumstances, and their ideas of education created difficulties.

Again, it has to be mentioned that while the European lady missionaries contributed immensely to the development of Ngwato women, the effects of their presence or activities also tended to be perceived in terms of European culture. Their methods and approaches also specifically adapted a patriarchal power structure, either foreign or indigenous, rather than fighting for the recognition of women, although some of them did challenge male dominance. Measures restricting women were generally interpreted in terms of foreign laws. For instance, the lady missionaries, like other male European missionaries, were happy to be allied with or to seek political support from their home colonial administrative officers in such matters as imposition of foreign marriage laws, as illustrated above. Furthermore, they seemed to endorse the socially assigned responsibility of women, of child-bearing and household duties, and many other particular hardships which were faced by Ngwato women, under their resistance of alien rule.

This chapter has also offered a brief discussion of strategies used by women to contest male bias in everyday attitudes and practices. These strategies differed across time and space and for different groups of women in different social and political situations. But there were some common themes, in particular, the importance of women getting together and acting publicly. Whenever this was done women's lives generally improved in complex and contradictory ways. Wives of wealthy and well-connected husbands, for instance, could acquire resources easily and exercise what could be termed as 'bottom power' and were derivative of their husbands' power. They could obtain lucrative western imported goods.

Some missionaries however contributed substantially to the diagnosis and understanding of male bias and campaigned to overcome it. However, even those missionaries who were aware of the problem did not provide useful conceptual tools for the elucidation of the male bias. So, as we have seen, even within Christianity there were differences in the experiences of women and men. In fact the Ngwato Church history of the 1920s has shown that acute inequalities were survived by men making allies out of the deprived women, who became implicit accomplices. The absence of protests against men and the unquestioning response of these women was not however evidence of that inequality. Even when there was no overt prejudice against women, less obvious forms of male bias denied women the resources required to be truly independent. Some women showed little understanding of the operation of male bias and did much to perpetuate it.

In the next chapter I will endeavour to present a critical summary of the thesis and suggest further areas of future research in an effort to address these specific needs.

CHAPTER 8

General Concluding Remarks, Evaluation and Recommendations

This thesis has sought to examine the contribution of the LMS to the development of Ngwato Christianity up till 1923. This remarkable story shows how the growth of Ngwato Christianity was either helped or hindered by the missionaries.

One of the major observations of this study is that religion was in the centre of Ngwato life. Writing in 1928 W.C. Willoughby described this as follows:

‘Bantu life is essentially religious Religion so pervades the life of the people that it regulates their doing and governs their discourse to an extent that it is hard for Europeans to imagine. Materialistic influences from Europe are playing upon Africa at a thousand points and may break up the Bantu life, but the Bantu are hardly likely to be secularized, for they will never be contented without a religion that is not able to touch every phase of life and to interpret the divine in terms of humanity’.⁹⁶⁸

Although this thesis has observed that this religious background positively influenced the Ngwato response to Christianity, the missionaries argued for a complete discontinuity with that cultural heritage. Rather than contextualizing Christianity, the missionaries imposed a western form of Christianity, which led to social, political, and religious instability. The following quotation helps to emphasize the extent to which this sense of insecurity threatened the people’s lives:

‘Social changes, diverse yet interlinked, may feel threatening despite the strength of moral traditions.... The experience of rapid, wide and continuing change can be unnerving, and can put the moral traditions under strain. Change can become so threatening that people can no longer even communicate their fears about it to one another, and feel isolated in them. What are these changes that cause such apprehension’.⁹⁶⁹

For the Ngwato the major threatening factors resulted from the failure of the missionaries to reconcile the old and the new, which disrupted the Ngwato socio - political institutions. The disruption was greatest where such kings as Sekgoma and Macheng failed to wisely accommodate Christianity and then positively use this new ‘religion’ and its European agents to strengthen their political position. Such political figures were, however, eventually swept

⁹⁶⁸. W.C. Willoughby, (1928), op. cit, p.1.

⁹⁶⁹. Church of England, (1987), *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity*, p.3.

aside and their resistance crushed.

This study has also shown that contextualization was central to the rapid growth and spread of Christianity. The value of the Ngwato cultural background has been shown by the fact that, where there was no white missionary, Christians showed a higher level of dedication and maturity in Church matters than those under the tutelage of an ordained European,⁹⁷⁰ because a continual presence of a European missionary retarded growth and created a sense of dependence. The development of Christianity in the light of Ngwato culture, therefore, led to a rapid growth of the Church, a process which could have been facilitated by the missionaries' willingness to work in partnership with local evangelists and ministers. A contextualized form of Christianity met both the spiritual and material needs of the people as the Christian rituals of prayer over property, prayer for rain etc, replaced the age old cultural ones and therefore maintaining a sense of security. In 1863, for instance, the Ngwato Christian warriors preferred to turn to the missionary prayer instead of partaking in the usual ritual charming of guns, spears and shields, which usually preceded battle. At this level, therefore, this study has observed that Christianity did not remain a stranger in the Ngwato soil, but permeated, transformed and became part of the people's way of life. In this way the Ngwato accepted Christianity in their own terms and allowed it to naturally develop in their own cultural context. In its western form, Christianity had failed to transform or communicate with the people, while a successful or an appropriate introduction led to the development of a new form of Christianity, which acknowledged that Ngwato culture had its own place, ideas and values. This provided a sense of meaning and also became the basis for Christian growth. To the contrary, the missionary method of presenting Christianity, especially its wholesale rejection of Ngwato culture, led to a serious conflict. This approach, like the attitude of the Ngwato conservatives, who were out to defend the Ngwato culture at all cost, hindered a rapid growth of Christianity. It is for this reason that this study has shown that the growth of Christianity failed where it was purely western or thoroughly compromised by existing practices. This study, however, shows that the general Ngwato population saw their struggle not as against the missionaries as such, but as an effort to contextualise Christianity within the Ngwato cultural heritage. Some missionaries however were, at times, aware that Ngwato traditions and beliefs facilitated the growth of Christianity. John MacKenzie, for instance, argued that Christianity needed not to detach people from their way of life, but strengthen their

⁹⁷⁰J. MacKenzie, (1871) op. cit, pp.135-7.

Ngwatness. This very important point is the main thesis of the study, that, rather than forcing an alien culture upon the people, it was important to allow Christianity to transform and enrich the indigenous culture, because of the fact that religion does not live for itself or make any sense outside culture.

This study has also concluded that evangelization should be seen as a process of bringing the gospel to the people within their own cultural context, but not imposing one's own cultural position. This includes the recognition of people's past experience, their music, their language and other facets of their cultural values. The assumption by some missionaries, that Ngwato culture or tribal life in general, was heathen/pagan, meant that they saw it as empty of all worth and goodness. Seeing their sole aim as to evangelize, some of these missionaries failed to understand the significance of the people's culture to the growth of Christianity. This study has however realized that Christianity had the ability to permeate and transform culture and integrate those elements which facilitated its spread. This process was significant because a lack of a meaningful continuity with the past created a superficial form of Christianity, which eventually led to instability. The observations of this study have shown that once all the accretions of the western civilization had been paved away, Christianity began to concern itself with basic questions of Ngwato life. It is this provocative and profound discovery that motivated the BaNgwato to conclude that Christianity was of great significance to their lives and that it was able to permeate all aspects of life and address their everyday needs and problems.

Another important point raised by this thesis is that the development of Christianity amongst the Ngwato was more of a joint-venture between the missionaries and the former. Whenever the missionaries saw Church planting as a one-sided affair, in which the BaNgwato were passive recipients, and thus ignoring Ngwato initiative and contribution, both growth and the indigenization process were delayed or hindered. Adopting a confrontational approach or imposing choices also broke down genuine communication between the missionaries and the local Christians and thus also hindered the spread of Christianity. A two way traffic of ideas, however, brought the Ngwato Christians into the centre of their own Church life. This study has also observed that where a genuine interaction occurred, with the people's initiative being recognized, the whole cultural system such as the **Kgotla** and kingship structures, enthusiastically supported the whole missionary venture, politically and financially.

This thesis has therefore called for a fresh approach in missions and for cultural ways of communicating Christianity. An atmosphere of openness and dialogue, has been seen as a starting point to the development of such a mature relationship between the missionaries and the indigenous people. This, as the observation of this study shows, would help to solve the paternalistic relationship expressed by the missionaries and also correct those structures which seemed to perpetuate dependence on foreign personnel and finances. This point leads us to another important point of this study, which viewed the work of the missionaries as basically to gather and develop local congregations within the Ngwato cultural context, rather than putting more emphasis on foreign personnel. The study has seen the training of local leaders as the most suitable means of equipping local congregations to discharge their task. Using the 'three - self formular' by Rufus Anderson (1796 - 1880), an American Congregationalist and Henry Venn (1724 - 1797), an Anglican man,⁹⁷¹ this thesis has made an important outline of the key features necessary for the building up of an independent and indigenous Church. The BaNgwato saw this as the key issues over which, they could base the development of a self-propagating church. This principle rejected the one - sided view and the paternalistic attitude of the missionaries, and articulated a goal for a development of a self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating organization. This study has therefore seen the crucial issues, confronting both the European missionaries and the BaNgwato as the struggle to set the local church free of excessive reliance on the missionaries, which immobilized the young Church. One way to do this was through the training and settlement of a competent indigenous Church leadership upon a self-supporting system, which led to a rapid spread of Christianity whenever it was adopted. The ability of missionaries to conduct a local church to a stage of independence and self-propagation, has been seen by this study as the most important factor determining the success of any missionary enterprise. The response to the message should therefore mean the beginning of a Church - which should begin to witness for itself, and finance its own projects.

One of the most important observations, is that in addition to the missionary involvement, which led to a cultural aggression and a barrage of other things, the development of Ngwato Christianity was also influenced by the interaction between colonialism and the missionary movement. The impact of western civilization and colonialism, and the role played by the

⁹⁷¹. M. Warren, (1971), *To Apply the Gospel: Selection from the Writings of Henry Venn*, p. 28.

missionaries in all this had adverse effects on the people's traditional cultures, custom and practices, which compelled a resistance from the Ngwato. While the study has shown that the interaction between the political structure and the missionary movement at times presented a complex relationship, the assessment of the dealings between the missionary movement, the colonial Government or the traditional state gives a hint to the official religious policy, which developed as a result. Influenced by cultural factors in this relationship the Ngwato Church gained an influential position in political matters. This cultural factor enabled the King to play a central role in church affairs. As a result the Ngwato church structure was characterized by a close link between kingly power, the Church and the general functions of the state. This meant that the King and the church stood together in advancing the affairs of the State. This is why we find that in its struggle against the colonial Government, or at times against the missionary systems, the Ngwato system always responded by making a close link between the Church and political functions.

On the other hand, this study has observed that the factor of power, which developed from the connections between the missionary movement and the colonial Government led to the perception that Christianity primarily came from an economically and politically dominant culture. Due to this, the BaNgwato at times saw the mission as one part with the colonial power. This created a lot of distortions of the Gospel in the minds of its hearers. Although, the study has acknowledged that European missionaries could not have denied their own identities and their western culture from which they came, it also suggested that it was important that they distinguished between the Gospel and their western culture. A mere reproduction of European - styled institutions was clearly inadequate as a method of evangelizing the people. The form of Christianity resulting from such methods of evangelism were not only unsuccessful, but failed to penetrate the heart of Ngwato life or to appreciate the people's cultural base or their spirituality, which from the observation of this study played a vital role in their response to Christianity.

The study has also observed that when the missionaries first arrived to work among the BaNgwato, they worked within this cultural structure. But with the establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate they tended to attach themselves more and more to the colonial system. The reason was that missionaries always sought for support or to secure a position within the prevailing political authorities. With the support they got from the colonial state, for instance, the missionaries tried to weaken kingly power, especially if they thought that it

was not in favour of their activities. Study has also revealed that the LMS missionaries failed to adequately develop a local leadership, a process which deprived the church of a genuine independence, in terms of decision - making. Khama saw the development of the local evangelists and ministers as an essential factor for both the spread of Christianity and his political power in his territory. Although the missionaries were strongly opposed to such a structural connection between Christianity and politics, especially where it strengthened the kingly power, they recognised that the linkages had financial benefits for their work. Threatened by the fact that Khama would dominate them, the missionaries in various ways engaged in processes which weakened the influence of kingship. The Colonial Government was equally threatened by the political and religious influence of the church and the missionaries. It therefore tried to either limit or separate both kingly power and the missionaries from the church. This was so because the colonial Government at times found that the partnership between Khama, the Church and the missionaries strengthened Khama's government and worked against its policies.

It is my observation therefore that this study has given a better understanding of the importance of contextualizing Christianity. This also helped the people to understand more about Christianity and also to appreciate its role in the society. More such studies should be carried out in Botswana and southern Africa in general.

I would particularly like to point out the observations of two Church historians, which might give some guidance to the nature of these future researches. One is Adolf von Harnack who wrote saying:

'We study history in order to intervene in the course of history and we have a right and duty to do so To intervene in history ... this means that we must reject the past when it reaches into the present only to block us'.⁹⁷²

The other is Richard Lovett who stated that:

'History possesses a charm as a narrative of thrilling episodes in the past, as a picture of movements which have powerfully affected life and thoughts in days that are gone. But missionary history is hardly worth the telling, unless it leads the reader to bring the experience of the past to bear upon the missionary problems of today, and enables him to solve the problems of today by the insight and instinct, as it were, that reward the patient investigator into the deeds and the purposes of those who have gone before. A knowledge of

⁹⁷². A. Harnack, (1961), 'Adolf von Harnack's Interpretation of Church' in *Wilhelm Pauck, Heritage of the Reformation*, p.340.

the history of all the societies is of little service unless the conscience of the reader is enlightened, his love for the furtherance of the great missionary cause strengthened'.⁹⁷³

In an age where modernity and secularism are rapidly growing, Christianity has the responsibility to redirect the interpretation of ideas and social life in general. To preserve our society and maintain a distinct Christian identity, in matters of family life, education and politics, future research should attempt to find ways, which will encourage the Church to bring Christianity back to the centre stage of all spheres of life. As this study shows, a contextualized Christianity cannot detach itself from the day - to - day life of the people. This also applies to the conditions of women. Although a great interest in the study of women has developed in the last four years in Botswana, there is a need for further research in the role played by women historically.

In response to my letter on this issue of women, Musa Dube⁹⁷⁴ recently wrote:

'I have several suggestions about Batswana women. Before the coming of missionaries and colonialism the society was agro-based and division of labour gave women almost 50/50 roles: women as producer of corn and leaders of a home, and men at the cattle post.

Spiritually we had very influential religious figures such as Hosana, Sangoma, as you know about Ngwale cult.⁹⁷⁵

Thirdly, I think, labour immigration left many women without a choice. They had to head families and produce food.

However women were excluded from the **kgotla** ie. leadership. This was the only oppressive factor I can think of. You must remember they had their own **Bojale**, women did not take a man's name, but either used their father's totem, or their first born child's name or a **Mophato's** name. These aspects probably have something to do with women's involvement in the African Independent churches.'

She went on:

'Contrary, to what you say, Christianity was not really liberating. Like Setswana cultures it had both liberating and oppressive aspects - women missionaries were made Sunday school teachers ... Christianity is also a mixed bag.'

⁹⁷³. R. Lovett, (1899), *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895, Vol.1*, p.vii.

⁹⁷⁴New Testament Scholar and University of Botswana lecturer.

⁹⁷⁵The Sangomas and Hosanas (female religious priests) as well as the Ngwale cult are only found among the Kalanga and Ndebele.

This quotation clearly shows that there is a need for studies to be carried in as far as of the contribution of women in the general history of the BaTswana concerned.

While this study has observed that women were historically marginalized and discriminated against, as far as public life was concerned, it is important that specific studies be carried out to see if women never even made covert contributions in the political and religious arena. Although some LMS missionaries, at times encouraged women to revolt against this practice, the missionary Christianity perpetuated the cultural position of women. Both European male missionaries and Ngwato males seemed to be in agreement as to the position of women in the church. The missionary type of Christianity gave very little attention to the contribution of women and also supported the Ngwato male views on women, because they saw this as promoting their work.

This study also observed that an attempt to indigenize Christianity therefore created a new problem, because it sometimes continued the disparaging cultural views on women. It was however Christianity which brought a genuinely liberating experience for women. It was actually through the role of European female missionaries that women were motivated to begin to play a crucial part in the spread and growth of Christianity.

Future studies on the historical position of women will therefore need to examine this issue in more details, especially assess the question of whether there was a deliberate or conscious intention by the cultural law to protect men, to the detriment of women. Although, it is my observation that women were to some great extent exploited, it has not been the central aim of this study to examine if this was consciously intended, but to simply show that Christianity was to a large measure influenced by such cultural factors. It is therefore necessary to clearly establish whether the Ngwato culture actually saw women as irresponsible and thus unable to participate in the political life of the society. It is also necessary that a research be carried out to examine the reason why women responded to Christianity. As the findings of this study show, it is evident that women made the majority of the early converts to Christianity during the period under consideration. The question which remains unanswered is to whether it was for economic reasons, for spiritual reasons or because of their oppressive conditions or all of these.

Finally, I would also suggest that a future comparative study of the missionary movement in

Botswana and Southern Africa in general should be carried out. The aim of such a study, would be to examine the response of different African groups to the missionary form of Christianity in the nineteenth century. Of great interest, to me, would be to compare the response of the Tswana of Botswana with the response of such peoples as the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, the Zulu of South Africa and the Sotho of Lesotho, during the period covered by this study. It will also be interesting to examine the role played by local evangelists and ministers in spreading Christianity in Bechuanaland and Southern Africa in general, as well as to assess how their methods and approaches differed from those of the missionaries.

In summary, therefore, it must be said that while the principal aim of the whole missionary enterprise was to establish a church among the BaNgwato, the focus of the study has been to show how they contributed to the development of a contextualized type of Christianity. It has also shown that while the missionary methods tried to impose a western form of Christianity, embedded in their own culture - its social, moral and power structures, the resultant responses of the BaNgwato were within the context of their existing culture. In this way then, we have observed that the Ngwato church's potential was to a great extent influenced by the Ngwato traditional political and religious systems. Contextualization of Christianity, to use Shoki Coe and Sapsezian's definition, has been used in this study to mean the capacity to relate and respond meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one's situation.⁹⁷⁶ This also meant that the planting of the Church had to be developed on the basis of self-government, self-propagating and self-supporting principles, if autonomy and self-reliance had to be achieved. Dependence on foreign finances and personnel defeated that end. Presentation of Scripture in a meaningful way, therefore, meant that Christianity had to be seen, known, understood, welcomed, spread and supported in culturally relevant ways, peculiar to people's experiences, problems and needs, if it was to easily adapt and translate itself to that environment.

⁹⁷⁶ Shoki Coe & Sapsezian, (1972), *Ministry in Context. Theological Education Fund.*

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